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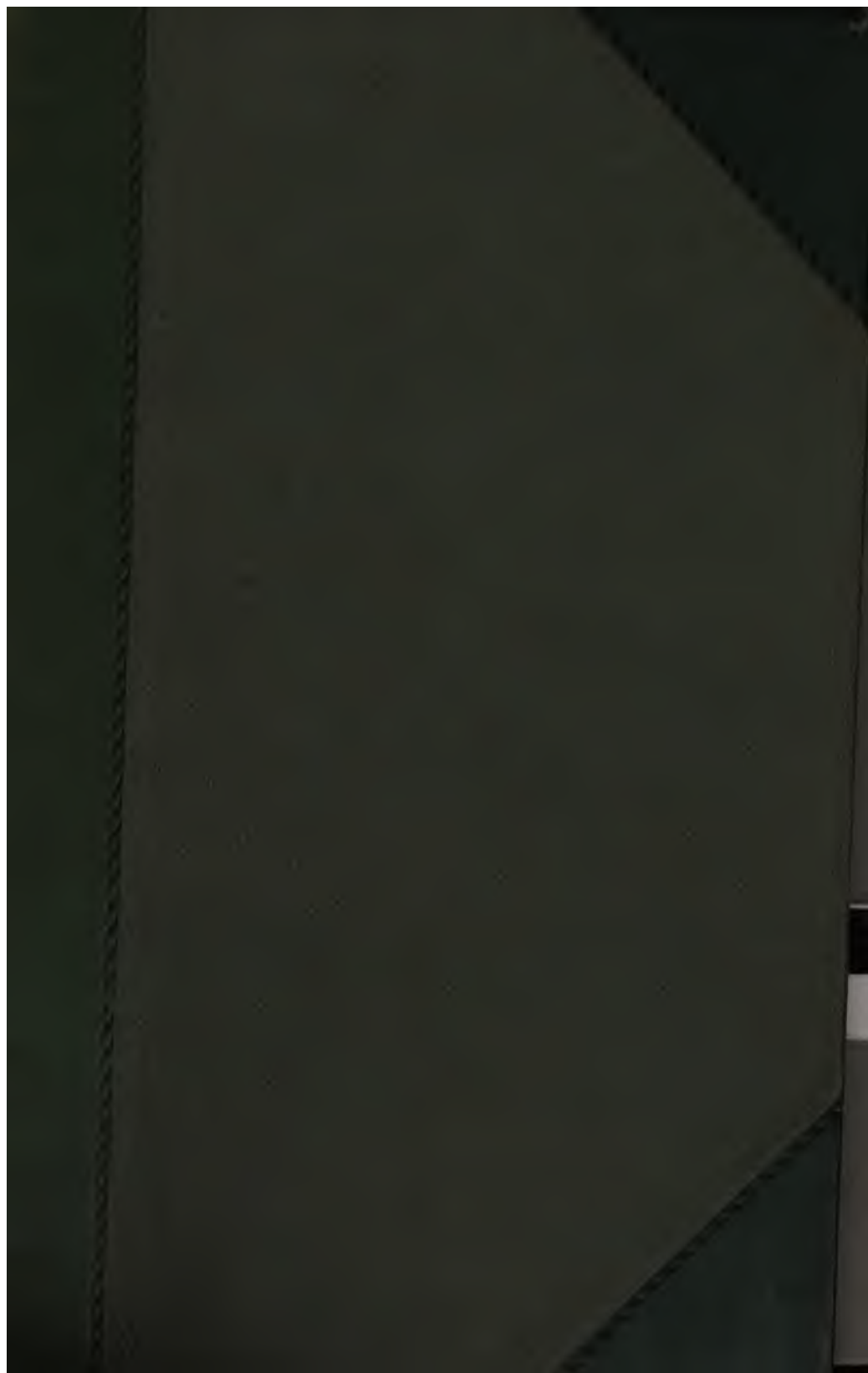
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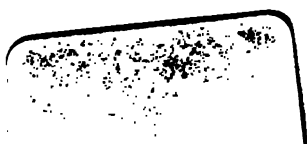
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BY THE LATE

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small proportion of either ever return.* Such are the evils which accompany war under its most favourable circumstances; and which those countries endure which are not themselves the theatre of warfare, and which finally prevail in the contest. The state of the country where the war is waged is wretched beyond description. Cities are destroyed, agriculture and every peaceful art interrupted, large and flourishing provinces depopulated and ruined, often with circumstances of most shocking barbarity. Pestilence and famine, the concomitants of war, complete what the sword has left undone. It is unnecessary to enter into a farther detail of what every history presents, and what every person who has witnessed these dreadful scenes knows so well.†

* In the war which commenced in 1756, it is estimated that 100,000 of our seamen perished, not one in ten of whom fell in battle. It is well known that, when a regiment has been some years in actual service, seldom one fourth, and sometimes not a tenth, of the original soldiers are found surviving.

† *Hæc itaque mala, tam magna, tam horrenda, tam sæva, quisquis cum dolore considerat, miseriam necesse esse*

portion of the peaceful inhabitants, to whom no share of the guilt can be imputed."

Powerful as these considerations are in the eye of reason and humanity, the experience of every age affords proof of their inefficacy. In barbarous ages they are entirely disregarded, and, in an age which boasts of superior civilization, they are unable to restrain the ambitious and angry passions of men.

The arguments drawn from the absurdity of war are confirmed by the experience of successive ages, and may be expected in time to prevail.

War is seldom effectual in gaining the objects for which it is undertaken; the objects when obtained often prove insignificant, are attended with little or no national advantage, and are sometimes positively hurtful: the most successful war obstructs the growing prosperity of the nation, and subjects it to permanent burthens, which far overbalance any gain its victories have purchased.

War is seldom effectual in gaining the objects for which it is undertaken. When a powerful fleet or army, commanded by officers of reputation, is sent forth to action, the ex-

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vigour about the beginning of the present century. It is now somewhat upon the decline. Hence a complex arrangement of treaties and alliances ; where the avowed object of each party is the preservation of the peace and balance of Europe, the real motive is generally their own aggrandizement.* One effect of this system is to render wars when they break out more universal, and their calamitous consequences more extensive.

It cannot be denied that, when a powerful and ambitious prince threatens danger to his weaker neighbours, prudence justifies and requires the union of several in an alliance for mutual defence. But it may be doubted whether that refined system which artful politicians have extended so far, be really necessary. It admits of no doubt that it has often been employed as a mask to ambition ; neither can it be doubted that the means employed for the preservation of this balance have often

* They presented " An address to the king to enter into new alliances with the states for preserving the *peace* and liberty of Europe. These words were considered, as they were indeed, an insinuation towards *war*." Burnett's History of his Own Times.

militated against it, sometimes from an original error in the policy embraced, and sometimes from incidents which arose during the course of the contest, and gave a new turn to the state of public affairs. We have sometimes supported France against Austria, at other times we have supported Austria against France. In the course of a few years we have fought against Prussia in support of the Empress, and against the Empress in support of Prussia; we have aided, and we have obstructed the enterprises of Russia against the Turks; we have joined with Russia against Sweden, and with Sweden against Russia. Such are the fluctuating notions entertained of the balance of power, and the means of supporting it.

If we carefully examine the vicissitudes of national affairs as recorded in history, we shall not attribute much to refinements in politics, but shall generally trace their causes to circumstances which human prudence could not foresee, and which are seemingly inadequate to their effect.

War is sometimes demanded to humble a nation which we consider as our *natural*

enemy. A prejudice so absurd does not deserve, and hardly admits of, a serious refutation.

War depresses the prosperity of nations. The foundations of national riches are the natural fertility of the country, the number of inhabitants, and quantity of productive labour. The first is the gift of nature; the others depend upon moral and political causes, and are much obstructed by war. The amount of the annual national income consists of the produce of the soil, improved by human labour, and fitted for the various purposes of life, the articles which we have in superfluity being exchanged with foreign nations for those we want. This is the fund that may be annually consumed by the inhabitants in the necessities and enjoyments of life, or may be partly saved to increase the national capital, and contribute to the wealth of succeeding years. Whatever increases this fund tends to enrich the nation; whatever diminishes it tends to impoverish the nation.

It will readily be admitted that a nation, whose inhabitants are all industrious, must be richer, *cæteris paribus*, than one whose inha-

bitants are partly industrious and partly idle. The idle must be maintained at the expense of the industrious, and a smaller quantity of the comforts of life will fall to the share of each. And, if the part of the inhabitants who are not employed in productive labour, instead of being idle, be employed in fighting, this does not alter the case in regard to national riches. They might as well be paid for being idle, provided there was no occasion to fight. Besides, they must be furnished with the implements of war, which in modern times are very complicated and expensive. The labour of all those who are employed in preparing the necessary apparatus of war must therefore be subtracted from the public stock. But all this is only a part of the loss which the nation sustains. It is an object of war to seize and destroy the property of the enemy. The enemy will attempt to seize and destroy ours, and will always succeed in some degree. In every war among commercial nations captures at sea are frequent : what we lose in that manner is subtracted from the national wealth ; the practice of insuring only transfers the loss from one hand to another. Neither is this loss compensated by the prizes we take from

the enemy, for against these prizes we must state the expense of equipping and supporting the ships employed in that service ; and it is doubtful whether privateering turns out, in general, a profitable adventure.

All these articles of loss are what certainly must be sustained in every war. No notice has been taken of those which probably may, and often do take place.

The foregoing reasons afford a complete and satisfactory proof that war must in every case obstruct the wealth of the nation. An argument in opposition to this doctrine is drawn from the increase which some branches of trade and manufacture receive at the commencement, and during the continuance, of war. Our fleets and armies require large supplies of various articles, and these must be provided with all possible dispatch. Hence the professions which supply these articles must derive an advantage. But every person who understands the true sources of national wealth, will perceive, that the labour employed upon the articles consumed in the destructive art of war, though profitable to a few, is lost to the community.

War subjects the nation to permanent bur-

thens. This will lead to some observations upon the system of funding ; a system which commenced in this country about a century ago, and has been embraced by most nations in Europe, and carried to an extent that almost surpasses credibility.

The amount of debt contracted each war has been much greater than the payment during the succeeding peace ; also the amount contracted each successive war has been greater, in proportion to the time of its continuance, than that contracted in the former war. It is impossible for a system, thus conducted, to go on for ever, and it is not probable that it can go on for any considerable time.

The taxes imposed to pay the interest of the national debt are a heavy burthen upon the people, and fall with peculiar weight upon the industrious. Every man is conscious of a natural right to enjoy the fruits of his industry. As the protection of government enables him to carry on his business in security, it becomes his duty to contribute to the necessary expense of government. But he must also contribute for the expense of former wars, the effects of which cannot now

be traced, except in the permanent burthens they have left. As the right of any age to impose burthens on posterity, for waging wars from which posterity derives no benefit, is questionable ; it may happen in some succeeding age, when their weight is become still more intolerable, and when experience has farther displayed the absurdity of the system, that mankind will boldly throw off what they are no longer able to endure. Should this take place, it must occasion great national calamities. The ruin of the stockholders would involve the ruin of many others. The dissolution of our present happy government, and a period of anarchy and tumultuary distraction, would be the probable consequences. The nation might arise again, perhaps more flourishing than before, after the storm was over ; but the first effects would be dreadful, and their duration probably considerable. It is an event which no man would wish to see ; and which no prudent minister should endanger, by pushing the national burthens to the utmost.

Taxes raise the price of labour, and consequently enable foreign nations, less encum-

bered than us, to bring their goods cheaper to market. This must drive us out of the most valuable part of our trade, the exportation of our home manufactures. It has already done so in some branches, and, if in others we be still successful, we should be careful not to endanger their loss by heavier burthens. There is more occasion to withdraw those under which they already labour. Our countrymen have acquired much dexterity in many branches of manufacture : by carrying them on to a great extent they have pushed the division of labour to the utmost ; and the application of machinery to facilitate labour has been employed, with much ingenuity, to a very great degree. In these respects we are superior to most foreign nations, and are able to rival them in many branches of manufacture, although our price of labour be higher than theirs. But we cannot expect always to retain that superiority of skill we at present possess. Few will be so partial as to believe that the genius for manufacture is confined to their countrymen. Many foreigners, employed in these professions, are active, inquisitive, ingenious. They

will imitate our improvements ; for it is well known that these cannot be monopolized for any country, by practising the arts of secrecy. They will invent others, and the disadvantages they sustain from carrying on their manufactures on a smaller scale will in time be surmounted. When they equal us in other respects, the cheapness of their labour must preponderate the scale in their favour.

It is said that the national debt has been already carried to a greater extent than was thought practicable when the scheme of funding commenced, and it is difficult to ascertain how much farther it may still be extended ; that, although our burthens be great, we have still great resources ; our national credit is good : and the same arguments, now used against a farther accumulation of debt, were used half a century ago ; and the experience of that period has rather tended to their refutation.

In answer to these reasonings, we may observe, that there certainly is a limit, beyond which the national credit cannot be stretched, and that each successive war has carried us by fast strides towards that limit. That,

however the sentiments of our fathers may have fixed it too low, it would have been well if we had never made the discovery of their mistake, as no national advantage has resulted, but much national loss been sustained from the heavy load which experience has proved us able to bear. That it is equally irrational for a nation to push its debt to the utmost, as for a private person to do so. That till either be in a state of absolute ruin, it is still in their power to borrow more by agreeing to the terms of usury. That amidst our boasting of the strength of national credit, it would perhaps be well for us if we did not find it so easy to borrow, as it certainly would be for an extravagant heir to be prevented from ruining himself and family, by being circumscribed in the funds which he squanders with endless profusion.

The loans at the end of a war have always been obtained on terms more unfavourable for the public. In several, the capital debt contracted has been considerably more than the sum actually advanced by the creditor. What can the most thoughtless prodigal do more?

There are reasons for believing that the na-

tional debt cannot be extended much farther. The most productive taxes are those upon consumption, and these may either be imposed upon the luxuries or the necessities of life. The former are the only proper subjects of taxation, and hardly an article of that kind remains untouched. If taxes be pushed beyond a certain degree, they defeat themselves, by lessening the consumption, or increasing the temptation to smuggling. In consequence of this, the legislature has already found it necessary to reduce the taxes upon several articles that were very proper subjects of taxation. Taxes upon the necessities of life are already imposed in several instances, and bear very hard upon the poor and laborious. If extended much farther, the burthen will become intolerable.

In the same degree as our national resources are exhausted, our strength is diminished, and we lose our weight in the scale of nations. By engaging in wanton and unnecessary wars, we render ourselves unable for necessary and defensive ones. It may be a matter of policy with hostile nations, who perceive our extreme profusion, artfully to waste our strength in

indecisive wars, till it be exhausted, and we be obliged to succumb.

Some derive consolation from thinking, that however heavy our burthens may be, the situation of our enemies is no better. We may not have certain information of the fact. If it be so, a man whose liberal mind can surmount the narrow barriers by which nation is separated from nation, and view the human race as an object of benevolence, will observe with more regret that the sufferings of the contending nations are mutual. Or, if this sentiment be thought too refined, the patriot, who understands and wishes the happiness of his country, will perceive that its prosperity has been depressed, and continues to be depressed, by the burthens of war; and his feelings for the absolute evil sustained will not be alleviated by considering what is passing in other nations. The skilful politician, who has remarked the vicissitudes of human affairs, and perceives that our strength, and perhaps the strength of our enemy, is exhausted, will dread that some other nation, rising in power, and unengaged in the present contests, may improve our mu-

tual weakness to its own advantage, and acquire that superiority which we are no longer able to maintain.

A person convinced of the burthen and danger of the national debt, naturally turns his thoughts to the different ways in which it may possibly terminate. If it continue to increase, as it has done during the present century, no human policy can prevent it from terminating in national bankruptcy. The debt contracted each war ought to be paid off in the subsequent peace. If this upon the whole be not done, an accumulation takes place which must at last prove fatal. The sums annually borrowed in war should exceed the sums annually paid off in peace, only in the same proportion that the duration of peace exceeds the duration of war. From the beginning of this century to the present year 1790, there have been fifty-six years of peace, and thirty-four years of war, without bringing in to the account several threatenings of war, which occasioned considerable expence to the nation, but passed over without actual rupture. In these thirty-four years of war, the debt contracted has amounted to two hun-

dred and thirty-six millions, or almost seven millions annually, at an average. In the fifty-six years of peace, the debt paid off has amounted only to twenty-seven millions, which is not so much as half a million annually, at an average. If we confine our attention to the latter part of the period, which appears to furnish a more probable ground of conjecture in regard to the future, the facts are still more unfavourable. The debt contracted in one year has sometimes amounted to twelve millions, and once to thirteen millions and a half; in consequence of which, twenty, and twenty-one millions have been added to the public debt, and, besides this, an unfunded debt contracted. The payments in one year never amounted to two millions, and the sum now proposed to be applied for discharging the national debt is only one million. The interest of the national debt exhausts one half of the annual revenue. Hence little can be spared towards the expences of war, or towards the extinction of debt in time of peace. If we are to judge from past experience, there is little reason to expect so long a continuance of peace, that the application

of one million annually, with all the advantages of compound interest, may extinguish or considerably diminish the national debt. In the trial of a few years of peace, it has been already found necessary to borrow a million upon a new scheme, that the million appropriated from the sinking fund might not be encroached on. That any relief is given by paying off an old debt, while a new debt is at the same time contracted, is a conceit too shallow to impose upon any but the weakest and most credulous. Various schemes have been proposed for paying off the national debt, by complicated operations of finance. When such schemes have been proposed by private persons, they probably deceive themselves ; when held forth by statesmen, there is reason to suspect they are intended to amuse the public credulity. Every scheme which does not reduce the average expence of war and peace together, allowance being made for their proportional duration, below the amount of our annual revenue, is founded on delusion. Some have proposed a composition of the national debt ; that we might pay in part, as a bankrupt does, what we are not able to pay

fully. Others have proposed to resolve the permanent debt into annuities for lives or years ; and others to make such defalcations in the payment of interest to the public creditors, that the value of the funds might gradually fall, by which means the bad consequences of a sudden shock would be avoided. These are only different modes of bankruptcy ; it is not probable any of them will ever be embraced. Bankruptcy, under any form, is a measure too desperate for any administration to adopt voluntarily and deliberately. If it overtake us, it will be without consent, when it is impossible to resist it longer. Convinced of the destructive tendency of the system hitherto followed, of the futility of the schemes proposed for relieving our national burthens, and of the insufficiency of the application of one million annually for that purpose, a gleam of hope may be drawn from other resources, which may contribute to aid the exertions of public economy and moderation. The value of the precious metals has fallen, first rapidly and then gradually, since the discovery of America, and there is reason to believe that it still continues to fall.

If a sensible alteration of this sort should take place in the course of another century, although our nominal debt may be then nearly the same, our real debt may be considerably diminished. The population of Britain has increased, and there is reason to hope it still continues to increase. If peace prevail, and agriculture, trade, and manufactures flourish, the increase may be still extended far. There are grounds for believing that, if agriculture were improved to the utmost, at least twice the present number of inhabitants might be maintained, without depending upon a foreign supply of provisions. The amount of taxes upon each individual is at present nearly forty shillings. If the number were doubled, an equal sum would be raised by a taxation of twenty shillings. The present taxes would prove more productive. The most burthensome might be repealed, and there would still be a surplus to augment the fund for discharging the national debt. The appropriation of a million, or of what can be spared, for payment of our debts, is a measure highly commendable, but insufficient alone to answer the purpose. If along with this the wisdom

and moderation of our measures with foreign nations be such as to prolong the periods of peace, and prevent future accumulations ; if the alteration of the value of money operate towards our relief, and if the increasing number of our countrymen lighten the burthen upon each individual ; posterity may be gradually relieved from incumbrances which cannot in our time admit of any considerable diminution.

Let the arguments urged by the advocates * for war be heard in their turn. Frequent wars, it is said, are necessary for maintaining the military spirit upon which national defence depends. By a long continuance of peace we become unfit for fighting, and fall an easy prey to every invader. Whatever force may be in this argument, it is not the motive that ever leads us to war. Men fight to gratify some present passion, and not to preserve their capacity of fighting. The degree of attention due to military spirit varies with circumstances. The situation of our country, the state and character of neighbouring nations,

* Ferguson's Essay on the History of Civil Society, Lord Kaimes' Sketches, &c.

and the manner of conducting war in our age, ought to be considered. It should not be neglected, and it may be over-rated. War cherishes the manly virtues, courage, fortitude, perseverance; it gives scope to the most active and strenuous exertions of the human powers. By a course of peace and prosperity, the human mind becomes enervated and debased. This argument is different from the former. It inculcates the support of the military virtues from their intrinsic excellence, as the other did from their utility. We entirely agree with those who urge it in assigning the first place to the improvement of human nature. Our object ought to be to render the nations virtuous and happy rather than wealthy and populous. But we cannot agree with them in the high estimation in which they hold the military qualities. Human nature possesseth a sufficient stock of these qualities, and when called forth by national emergencies, they shine conspicuously, and dazzle the multitude. We read with avidity the achievements of Alexander and Cæsar; but when we try their characters by the tests of reason and virtue, we cannot hold them forth as orna-

ments to human nature. It is not that restless ambition which aims at its own aggrandizement, without regard to consequences, and generally by means prejudicial to society, which ought to engross our esteem. In peaceful and in private life we meet characters, not only amiable, but highly respectable. The virtues which flourish there are less splendid, but not less excellent.

Besides the qualities directly requisite in war, it gives opportunities for the exertion of some of the noblest virtues,—generosity, friendship, disinterestedness.

It is not denied that war presents occasions in which these virtues are sometimes displayed conspicuously : so does every calamitous event of human life ; notwithstanding which we shun calamities as far as we can. The general operations of war are fitted to excite malignant passions, cruelty, revenge, treachery,* and to blunt the feelings of humanity and benevolence. The object of war is to deceive and to destroy.

* There is hardly any measure of treachery or cruelty which theoretical writers do not admit as authorised by the laws of war. *Et passim occidere jus belli vocatur—non eos*

War, it is said, affords an outlet to persons of high spirit and ambition, who might prove troublesome members of society, and it relieves us of the idle and profligate among the lower ranks. It has been observed that a smaller number suffer by the hand of justice in time of war than in time of peace.

Under a firm government, the ambition of private persons is not dangerous, and it may be directed to objects of public utility. It is better that a few should suffer by the executioner, than many thousands fall victims to the perils of war. Besides, the increase of

tantum, qui actu ipso arma gerunt, aut qui bellum moventis subditi sunt, sed omnes etiam qui intra fines sunt hostiles ;—quod infantium quoque et fœminarum cædes impune habetur, et isto belli jure comprehenditur :—nec captivi quidem ab hac licentia exempti ;—nec qui se dedunt semper recipiuntur ; nota et hæc belli jus—sed et acceptos in deditionem sine conditione ulla, interfici ;—idem jus et in obsides usurpatum—stupra in fœminas passim legas, et permissa, et impermissa, &c. Grot. lib. iii. cap. iv. Indeed in other parts of his elaborate work, he recommends moderation in the exercise of these rights. When a man writing at his ease permits so much, what may not those whose passions are inflamed by the scenes of war be expected to practise !

business in our criminal courts, when peace is concluded, may rather be considered as a consequence of war. The licentiousness of military life is communicated by the contagion of example, and among our private soldiers and sailors profligacy is almost universal.—When multitudes of such men are disbanded, indigent, and unfit for the labours of peaceful life, it is not surprising that crimes should multiply. In a moral point of view this consideration affords an argument of the greatest strength against war in general.

It is further said, that war is necessary to thin the numbers of mankind, which would soon multiply, without that scourge, so as to overstock the earth. The irruptions of barbarous nations, who would not apply to agriculture, may be attributed to the insufficiency of their territory for their support. But it is questioned if any civilized nation was ever yet driven to war, to find room for their increasing numbers. In the same proportion that a country becomes populous it becomes rich and flourishing. Europe is still far from being peopled to the utmost, and the other quarters of the world much less so. It will

be time enough to reduce our numbers by war, when the superfluity becomes burthensome. In this country we can urge no such plea, for in war we hire foreign soldiers, and distress our trade by impressing sailors.

Wars, it is said, have prevailed in all ages, and are still likely to prevail. It seems to be an appointment of providence, and intended for wise purposes in our present state. It is impracticable to maintain perpetual peace : it is presumptuous to attempt it.

If war be an appointment of Providence, so are pestilence and famine. There is reason to think that mankind will never be entirely delivered from any of these scourges, and we believe they are all rendered subservient to the wisest purposes by that great over-ruling hand which bringeth good out of evil. But experience shews that human art has been able to do much to mitigate the devastations of famine and pestilence, and render their visitations less frequent. In consequence of the improvements in agriculture and commerce, famine in Europe is now seldom felt ; and the alterations in our manner of living, and precautions used to prevent foreign conta-

gion, have been equally effectual against pestilence. It is not unreasonable to believe, that, by further exertions, these calamities may be yet more completely and universally overcome. And the attempt, so far from partaking of impiety, is an act of the highest beneficence to mankind, and as such entirely conformable to the spirit and precepts of true religion.

Why then should it be thought impracticable to deliver mankind in a considerable degree from the calamities of war? In consequence of the civilization of modern manners, war is already in some respects less destructive. Prisoners are seldom butchered, or reduced to slavery; and shocking cruelties, and extensive devastations, are less frequent. And so far well. But, after making every deduction that truth permits, enough still remains, and must ever remain, while war is waged, to give force to our former arguments against it.

Upon a review of the whole argument, and after making allowance for what is urged on the opposite side, we cannot hesitate to pronounce that war is the absurdest and most

destructive of human measures ; that it brings much evil upon the conquering as well as upon the vanquished nation ; that its objects are often frivolous, seldom attained, and, when attained, seldom advantageous ; that heavy burthens are its constant attendant, and these not confined to the present age, but entailed upon posterity.

PART II.

WE are now to enquire into the motives or circumstances which induced Britain to engage in former wars, and their consequences.

We shall not enter into a detail of those bloody wars which were waged against France for some centuries, with a view to the conquest of that kingdom, or at least of some of its best provinces. It is now generally agreed, that the object would have been no less hurtful to Britain, if obtained, than the scheme appears from the event to have been impracticable.

In the reign of James I. application was

made for assistance by his son-in-law the Elector Palatine, who was expelled from his dominions by the united power of the Emperor and several other German princes. This application was coolly received by the King, but warmly by the nation. It is hardly possible to conceive a quarrel in which England had less interest, which it would have prosecuted under greater disadvantages, or which was in every respect more impolitic. If the King had engaged in it, he would have been justly exposed to the charge of sacrificing the blood and interest of the nation, in a dispute which regarded his family only. Yet has that pacific monarch been branded, in his own and succeeding ages, chiefly upon account of his conduct in that affair, with every opprobrious epithet of cowardice and pusillanimity.

The troubles in the reign of Charles I. afforded no leisure for foreign wars. In the time of the Protectorate our achievements were glorious; but the wars carried on by the Commonwealth are now accounted contrary to sound policy, being directed against Spain, already too low, and against the Dutch

states, with which we ought to cultivate a friendly intercourse. The wars in the reign of Charles II. neither brought us glory nor advantage.

The first war with France, after the Revolution, was undertaken to assist the Dutch, and depress the power of Lewis XIV. Our armies were generally defeated, and it was terminated by the peace of Ryswich, in 1696, rather unfavourably. A debt of upwards of twenty millions was contracted, and the system of funding introduced. The sum, compared with subsequent contractions, is inconsiderable : but those who are convinced of the pernicious tendency of the system will deprecate its commencement in a war with which this nation had only a secondary concern.

The next war, which commenced in 1701, was on occasion of the succession to the crown of Spain. The object was to prevent the junction of the French and Spanish monarchies, and to procure the latter for a branch of the Austrian family. A treaty for the partition of the Spanish monarchy had been transacted by King William. The first treaty for that purpose being found exceptionable, a

second one was substituted in its room. The powers of Britain, Austria, and Holland, were united against those of France and Spain; but the heaviest part of the expence devolved on Britain. The success of the allied armies was glorious in a high degree. Signal victories were gained against superior armies; strong fortresses taken, and all the efforts of the French monarch frustrated with ignominy. After a warfare of ten years, the death of the emperor's eldest son rendered the original object of the war impolitic, and there was already reason, notwithstanding all our successes, to believe it impracticable. The succession was settled on a younger descendant of the French monarch, and some assurances given against the union of the monarchies, which might have been obtained at the commencement of the war. Some cessions were made in favour of our allies; but Britain hardly gained any national advantage at the peace. We cannot reckon as such the stipulation, however humiliating to France, for demolishing the harbour of Dunkirk; an article which was renewed in successive treaties, which was never fully executed, and which

was wisely abandoned on our part at the late peace. The debt contracted in this war was nearly forty millions.

The peace concluded at Utrecht in 1713, subsisted for twenty-seven years,—one of the longest periods of peace we meet with in the annals of our history. During that period the national debt paid off did not amount to eight millions.

The next war broke out, first with Spain in 1740. The chief ostensible cause was, the right claimed and exercised by the Spaniards of searching our vessels suspected of carrying on a contraband trade with their American settlements. In this they seem to have done no more than every nation has a right to do for maintaining its own laws. Soon after France joined in the war against us, and several other powers came in for a lesser share on either side. In this war we were unsuccessful. Some advantages at sea in part counterbalanced the defeats we sustained by land, and enabled us, after an eight years' contest, to terminate the war by leaving matters nearly as we found them. The point which gave occasion to the war remained undecided.

The debt contracted amounted to more than thirty-two millions.

One object of this war was to support the power of Maria Theresa, and the house of Austria. That object was obtained. In a few years after, the whole power of that house was exerted against us. The peace continued about eight years, and in that time about six millions of the national debt were paid.

The next war broke out in 1756, after having been brooding for several years. The cause was the encroachments committed upon the back settlements of our American provinces. The flames of this war were soon universally diffused. In the commencement, Russia was listed among our friends, and Prussia among our enemies. This arrangement was soon reversed. During the course of the war, Austria, France and Russia, and afterwards Spain, were united against Britain and Prussia. We omit some less considerable allies on both sides. Few wars have been more successful than this was on our part. After a few discomfitures in the beginning, the campaigns of following years afforded a shining train of victories in every quarter of

the world. The military operations of our allied army in Germany were indecisive indeed, but not inglorious. Those of the King of Prussia were uncommonly splendid. Often on the brink of destruction, his superior abilities withstood, and overcame the superior numbers of his enemies. In America, the French were completely expelled from their continental settlements, and the most valuable of their West India islands, as well as those of Spain, were taken. In Africa, in the East, success still attended our arms. The peace, though unpopular, was honourable. It left us in possession of the whole northern continent of America, so far as the Mississippi, and many other valuable acquisitions. During this war upwards of sixty millions were added to the public debt.

The peace subsisted for twelve years, and the amount of debt paid off in that time, exclusive of some which was never funded, did not amount to nine millions. A rupture with Spain had almost taken place in the year 1770, in consequence of an establishment we attempted upon the Falkland Islands, some barren rocks near the entry to the Straits of

Magellan. Our title to these islands was liable to dispute. The inutility of the settlement, and the umbrage it must give to Spain from its vicinity to theirs, were obvious ; and yet, for such a frivolous object, the spirit of the nation was disposed to plunge into war. The affair was compromised by administration upon honourable terms, but the compromise was unpopular.

After peace was re-established, Britain attempted to levy a revenue in America, by its own authority, in order to reimburse part of the expense contracted by the war. We enter not into the argument concerning the justice or prudence of this measure ; but only observe, that the security which the cessions at the peace procured for the colonies, furnished the pretext for the demand, and emboldened the colonists in their opposition. We cannot hesitate to affirm that the successes of the former war were the cause of this one. After a state of dissatisfaction, and tumultuous opposition to government, for some years, the American war broke fully out in 1775.— France took part in it in 1778, Spain in 1779, and the Dutch in 1780. At the conclu-

sion of the peace in 1783, the independence of the colonies was confirmed ; of all our possessions in North America, Nova Scotia and Quebec alone were retained ; Minorca, St. Lucia, and Senegal, &c. were ceded to the enemy. The debt contracted this war was one hundred and five millions.

In this war we had no ally. It has been boasted, that, acting alone against so many nations, although the event of the war was not successful, it was not dishonourable. A minister in the House of Commons, when charged with neglect in contracting alliances, declared that the glory which the nation had acquired, the jealousy entertained of her power, and hatred of her insolence, had rendered it impossible to procure any allies.

Such was the issue of this war. The object for which it was undertaken entirely lost ; many of the acquisitions of former wars wrested from us ; our national debts nearly doubled ; our respect in the scale of nations considerably lessened.

In the year 1787, we were again on the brink of a war. A struggle between the aristocratic and democratic parties in Holland had

proceeded to an open rupture. The former were supported by Prussia and Britain, the latter by France. In consequence of spirited or menacing remonstrances from Britain, France desisted from interfering, and by the assistance of Prussia the party of the Stadtholder gained the ascendant. France was at that time on the eve of an amazing revolution. Its peculiar circumstances might be known to our ministry, but they were not then known to the nation at large. Under any other circumstances, it is probable that remonstrances, such as we made, would have met with a different reception, and involved us again in the dangers and calamities of war.

Besides the expenses laid out in time of war, an additional charge has been incurred after the conclusion of peace, before matters could be brought to the footing of a peace establishment. This has been called a winding-up account. It has been always considerable, and, like the debts contracted in time of war, has increased with each succeeding war. It has also continued for a longer period. Although peace has now subsisted for seven years, the peace establishment is not yet fully adjusted.

The amount of the debt paid these seven years is about four millions, exclusive of what was never funded ; and the present amount of our debt is about two hundred and twenty-six millions.

Such have been the consequences of former wars ; such the increase of our burthens ; and such our situation, when there is every appearance of a new one. An attention to this detail of incontrovertible facts gives rise to some reflections. The national spirit inclines to war. We rush into it upon the slightest pretexts, and with sanguine hopes ; regardless of former failures, or the certain increase of public burthens. In every age and nation, too great a propensity to war has been displayed, especially with a view to conquest ; but we have distinguished ourselves by engaging in wars with which we had no concern, and without any design of conquest.

Opposite parties who disagree in every other measure, are united in favour of war. The late contest with regard to Holland, and the present one with Spain, afford examples of this unanimity.

The most obvious consequences of public measures are disregarded. Nothing is more

evident than that war must be supported by adequate grants of money ; that to raise this money, even upon the funding scheme, taxes are necessary, and that the taxes must be made effectual. Consistency requires us to oppose the first step, or acquiesce in all the rest. Yet we plunge into war with precipitancy ; the supplies are granted with little opposition ; the taxes occasion a considerable murmuring ; but the regulations necessary for enforcing the taxes excite the loudest clamour, and furnish the most copious topics for opposition.

We are always dissatisfied with the terms of peace. We look for conditions which it is improbable to obtain. An opinion prevails that our enemies excel us in the art of negotiating, as much as we excel them in the art of fighting. The fury excited by the peace of Utrecht is not yet forgotten. Nothing would then have satisfied the national ardour but to march our armies into the heart of France, and conquer or dismember that monarchy. The public discontent occasioned by the peace in 1763, the most glorious we ever made, is still fresh in every one's memory. The late

peace, although absolutely necessary, afforded topics for popular clamour.

It is not probable that we are really outwitted by the superior policy of our enemies. The truth rather is, that we overvalue our own advantages, and overlook our exhausted situation. If every circumstance at the time of these treaties be fairly weighed, the terms may not be found inadequate to the relative situation of the parties. If we had gained some advantages, and captured some of the detached possessions of our enemies, our victories were not decisive. The body of their nation was still unbroken ; their armies were still numerous and disciplined. If their finances were exhausted, ours were in no better order.

We have always taken a particular burthen in maintaining the balance of Europe. Our insular situation renders our concern in that balance at least less direct than that of the nations on the continent. The versatility of our measures proves that we have been often wrong. We have fought to preserve the liberties of Europe. Does Europe thank us ? Do they not rather consider us as officious inter-

meddlers? In the time of our distress, which nation stepped forth to aid us? Secure in our insular situation, and supporting a respectable fleet, we should do well to improve our trade and national prosperity, amidst the blessings of peace; and might leave our neighbours to fight their battles, and maintain their balances for themselves.

Upon these principles, those foreign alliances ought to be reprobated, which have a probable tendency to involve us in foreign wars. Alliances of this sort have been lately contracted with Prussia, Holland, and others. The contracting powers stipulate, in case of either being attacked, to lend their aid in men or money to a certain extent; and besides, if the stipulated aid be insufficient, they further bind themselves to assist their ally *with their whole strength*. When foreign wars break out, each nation pretends that it is defensive on their part, and it is often difficult to decide which is the aggressor. A demand is made for our aid, and we gratify our natural propensity to war by complying with it. If a demand be made on our part, we may not find our allies equally complying. If present

interest does not support our requisition, we shall receive elusory answers. Experience justifies this assertion. We shall search in vain for instances of succour received from abroad upon the principle of the faith of national treaties, without the bribe of subsidies, or other present interest.

Britain has discovered an extreme fondness for establishing settlements in all quarters of the world.

It is not intended to reprobate every thing of this sort. They may be useful for the extension of commerce ; they may supply us with the productions of foreign climates ; they may even be subservient to the purposes of humanity, by introducing civilization and useful arts among barbarous nations. At the same time our attachment to them may be immoderate. The expenses of establishing and supporting the settlements may be great ; the advantages equivocal. The cool voice of national interest may be less listened to than the glory of extending our dominions to every region. Experience has already evinced that our system of colonization in America was erroneous. Our eastern possessions have

proved a source of wealth to private persons, perhaps to the public. But how far territorial property in these distant countries promotes the public welfare, or accords with our free and happy constitution, is a point still undecided.

Of all foreign possessions, those of fortified places, held in the dominions of the independent nations of Europe, appear the least justifiable : yet to hold such possessions has been and still is a favourite passion of the British. Our conquests in France were wrested from us in the reign of Henry VI. except the city of Calais. This we held at a great expense, sometimes no less than one third of the ordinary national revenue, till the reign of Queen Mary. The loss of that place is said to have occasioned more discontent than all the cruelties she committed ; and the grief it occasioned, to have hastened her to her grave.

Dunkirk fell into the hands of the English in the time of the commonwealth, and was sold to the French in the reign of Charles II. under the administration of the Earl of Clarendon. The expense of maintaining it amounted to 120,000*l. per ann.* or one tenth

of the then ordinary revenue. The odium of that measure was the chief cause of the disgrace of that able and virtuous minister. Gibraltar has been in our possession since the year 1704. The expense of maintaining it in peace is great ; that of defending it in war, enormous.

The possession of that fortress is thought to give us certain advantages in time of war.

It affords us a harbour for refitting our fleets, employed in the Mediterranean station.

The propriety of maintaining a fleet in a sea where we have no settlements, may be questioned, when we have settlements to defend in every quarter of the globe. To send our fleets to fight the French in the Mediterranean, is a similar measure to that of sending our armies to fight theirs in Germany. The propriety of this last has been fully canvassed by the public.

We formerly possessed Minorca as well as Gibraltar. We sent our fleets to the Mediterranean, to defend Minorca and Gibraltar. We must retain Minorca or Gibraltar to accommodate our fleets in the Mediterranean.

The enemy may have part of their fleet in

the Mediterranean, and part in the Channel or Bay, and it may be of consequence to unite them. By possessing Gibraltar we prevent their junction.

This case may happen, but it is impossible to provide against every contingency which may occur in war, by permanent establishments. Notwithstanding our possession of Gibraltar, the enemy's Mediterranean fleet may effect its passage through the Straits; and their doing so does not appear an object of great moment. If our fleets be superior in strength and discipline to theirs, we may hope to meet them, wherever they are, and however united, with advantage. If the superiority be on their side, the possession of Gibraltar will avail us little.

Without Gibraltar we should lose our trade to the Mediterranean in time of war.

The same strength which we employ to convey succour to Gibraltar in time of war, would conduct a fleet of merchant ships through the Straits. The trade might be carried on under convoy without risks much superior to the ordinary ones in time of war. If it suffered, the object is not of sufficient consequence to

be put in competition with the charge of supporting Gibraltar.

In time of war the enemy besiege Gibraltar without success, and waste that strength in ineffectual efforts, which might be exerted against us in another quarter with more advantage.

The Spaniards indeed carried on a long siege last war ; but they have not done so every war ; nor is there reason to believe they will persevere in any measure contrary to their interest.

These are all the advantages we remember to have heard of, as resulting from Gibraltar in time of war ; for it has not been used, like Calais and Dunkirk formerly, as a road for invading the country of an enemy. It is whispered that it gives vent to some of our manufactures by affording opportunity for a prohibited trade with Spain in time of peace.

Although we do not affirm that the law of nations requires us to enforce the prohibitory regulations of foreign states ; yet such clandestine intercourse deserves little encouragement from the public, and cannot be decently

urged in defence of a measure of so much public consequence.

Against any advantage which the possession of Gibraltar may yield, we must state the enormous expence of maintaining and defending it, which last war exceeded a million in one year. We must also state that such possessions render the countries to which they naturally belong inimical, and dispose them to take part in every war against us.

An eminent senator is said to have declared in Parliament, that if Portsmouth were in the possession of the enemy, he would rather suffer them to retain it, than agree to exchange it for Gibraltar. We do not enquire how far such a sentiment will bear the test of common sense. It appears to have been thrown out as a flower of eloquence, in which judgment was not consulted. Certain it is, that whatever foreign state held Portsmouth against us, we should wage eternal war against that state till we had recovered it. Will not the same national spirit induce Spain to wage war against us, until they recover Gibraltar? In every war since they lost it they have borne a share against us; and we may reasonably

ascribe their doing so, and engaging in the family compact, to resentments naturally excited by so galling a situation.

The possession of a fortress so useless, so expensive, so insulting to the nation it naturally belongs to, is highly grateful to our national spirit. In time of war every call of honour requires us to exert ourselves in its defence. At the conclusion of peace it would be base to abandon a place we had so gallantly and successfully defended. So strongly was the voice of the people attached to it, that whatever might be the sentiments of the ministry at the late peace, they durst not propose to cede it. We soon enjoyed the gratification of offering an additional insult, by conferring a title of nobility from that obnoxious fortress.

Another argument against retaining Gibraltar is drawn from the probability that it may be one day wrested from us. The Spaniards must always be bent upon recovering it. They are at hand to catch an unguarded moment. It may not be always so carefully watched, and so bravely defended, as by the late gallant commander. The fortune of war, which turns

upon an hundred unforeseen accidents, may cease to favour us : and thus we shall lose, ignominiously and without any recompense, a possession which we may at present exchange upon honourable and advantageous terms.

Upon the whole it appears that this nation is forward to engage in war, hard to be satisfied with terms of peace, regardless of the burthens entailed upon posterity, ambitious of establishments in every corner of the globe, and especially of holding fortresses within the territories of foreign and hostile states.

The causes to which our national conduct may be ascribed are now to be enquired into.

First: It is to be ascribed in a great measure to that high spirit, which is a striking feature in our national character. It is foreign from our present design to enquire into the causes which distinguish the characters of nations. The general fact of their diversity, and the particular example under consideration, are unquestionable.

An Englishman exults in the bold and generous spirit of his country,—a spirit of liberty and enterprize, the source of whatever is great and glorious. He is quick to resent the

slightest appearance of public injury or insult; and boldly advances to punish the offending foe. He considers it as our natural privilege to reign mistress of the sea, and to hold the balance of Europe. He spurns at any counsels that may be offered to moderate his fervour, as the dictates of weakness and pusillanimity; or perhaps ascribes them to the insidious designs of secret enmity.

It is a wise and ancient maxim to listen to what our enemies say of us. They may exaggerate, but they generally censure the culpable part. The enemies of Britain hold us forth as insupportably insolent in our public conduct; and neutral states, not liable to any suspicion of unfavourable bias, admit that the charge is not entirely without foundation.

A British subject, who sincerely loves his country, and rejoices in her brave and active spirit, may at the same time acknowledge and desire to restrain its excesses. He may perceive that she sometimes transcends the bounds of prudence and moderation, perhaps of justice. Although a good citizen, he may not divest himself of the character of a man, nor rejoice in those national exertions, in re-

spect of which the sentiments of neutral states and the dictates of impartial reason declare us in the wrong.

In private life we meet with men who boast of their courage and unimpeachable honour, and who possess many excellent virtues.— They are open, friendly, generous, sincere ; but they are insolent, haughty, and vindictive. They are regardless what offence they give, and perhaps attack their neighbour, with design, on his irritable side. They are enraged by the slightest provocation, and deem it below the dignity of a man to heal a difference by explanation or concession. They run head-long into every quarrel, and are shunned as nuisances by the peaceable part of mankind.

Others are respected for their temperate and firm conduct. While their actions are directed by just and virtuous principles, their manners are conformed to the rules of strict decorum. They are careful of offending, and disposed to make allowances for the different tempers of mankind. They are cool and recollected in every situation. They will not submit to any considerable injury, but they are not provoked at every trifle. They have

not formed a resolution of never fighting ; but they act with so much discretion, that they may pass through life without being called to fight.

If this be Lælius, and that be Milo, who would prefer Milo to Lælius ? Which of these characters would we seek for in a friend ? Which of them must we esteem as useful to society ? To which of them ought we to wish our own character to conform ? In answering these questions, there is hardly room for hesitation. If the principles of public conduct be ultimately the same as those which regulate private life, and if the true honour of a nation depend on the same sentiments, and be established upon the same grounds, as those of an individual, the inference is obvious.

It belongs to those who affirm that the laws of public and private conduct are not the same, to explain the grounds of the distinction.

There are obvious reasons which render precipitation in national quarrels more inexcusable. The consequences are more extensive. An irascible man hurts himself or his antagonist. The mischief seldom extends

farther. The evils of war pervade the whole community, and affect multitudes who neither know nor are concerned in the cause of it. The government is answerable for the calamities it inflicts on those whom it was established to defend. The present generation is answerable for the burthens entailed upon posterity. A private man who fights and survives, is equally fit to fight again. This is not the case with a nation.

It is said that, if we do not discover a quick resentment of injuries, our forbearance will be imputed to pusillanimity, and expose us to fresh attacks; whereas a bold and spirited conduct intimidates our enemies, and confirms our security. This argument, when confined within due limits, is well founded; but, like many others, may be extended too far; and experience shews we have extended it too far. Have we discovered a tameness to bear with injuries? Has long peace been the consequence of our quick resentments? It is not the man who is always in haste to draw his sword, that passes through life with least disturbance. It is not the nation which runs most precipitately to arms, that preserves best its public tranquillity.

A similar maxim, which is true to a certain degree, but false and dangerous when pushed too far, is the propriety of being always prepared for war, as the most effectual means of securing peace. *Bellum ostendite, pacem habebitis*, is an adage in every one's mouth. Whatever fleets and armies we maintain in time of peace, neighbouring nations will do the same ; and when both sides are prepared for war, the slightest occasion will engage them in war. The language of our soldiers and sailors is, *We are prepared, let us fall on*. The language of our ministers is sometimes too much the same.

By maintaining considerable fleets and armies in time of peace, we prevent that relief to our finances which alone can enable us to carry on war, when necessary, with vigour. The warmest stickler for the point of national honour may consider, that frequent wars must disappoint his favourite passion. They will exhaust our national strength, and then we must be exposed to endure indignities.

There may, no doubt, be an excess of pusillanimity in public conduct ; but there is little occasion to guard against that weakness,

in an address offered to the British nation. Our temper leads us to the opposite extreme. Profusion is a vice equally reprehensible as avarice ; but, in arguing with a miser, we may save ourselves the trouble of cautioning him against the errors of profusion.

Secondly : Our national propensity to war may be ascribed to its promoting the interest of many individuals, and not a few of these in stations of influence, at the same time that it impoverishes the public. It produces this effect in a greater degree, the more lavishly the public treasures are squandered.

When war breaks out, the price of all commodities imported from abroad is raised by the additional charge of freight and insurance.— Merchants who have a stock of these goods on hand, gain by this advance of price. This motive directs the inclinations of a numerous class of men, universally diffused through the nation, and many of them in affluent circumstances.

Large quantities of various articles are required for equipping our fleets and armies. Manufacturers and others, to whose profession it belongs to provide these articles, have

the benefit of a sudden and great extension to their business.

Contractors with government in every department entertain the greatest hopes of gain, and are seldom disappointed.

The monied interest look forward to profitable loans. Bargains of that kind are always concluded to the public disadvantage.

Stockjobbers expect a plentiful harvest from the fluctuations of the public funds, in consequence of the vicissitudes of war. In that destructive field of gaming, every man trusts to the superior sagacity of his own conjectures.

Gentlemen in the army and navy are always impatient for war, which to them is the season of promotion; and gentlemen who intend to provide for their sons in the army or navy, concur with them, from a like motive.

But the greatest gainers by war are the persons entrusted with administration.

It is well known that a minister's influence in parliament is supported by patronage.— This is the engine by which he succeeds at elections, and retains the elected in his interest. In these corrupt times, the most up-

right minister cannot entirely dispense with it. The increase of patronage in time of war is immense. It adds firmness to his establishment, and gives him ample funds for rewarding his friends ; and all this he enjoys in the ordinary course of administration, without being driven to the odious measure of direct corruption. Besides, as war is generally favoured by the public voice, it adds to the popularity of his administration.

Nothing is more remote from our design, than to brand the present or any former ministry, as wicked men, who knowingly involve the nation in calamities, from selfish views. We only state the consequences which may be expected to result from the principles of human nature. Some rare characters possess a degree of candour and integrity, which no selfish views can bias or pervert. But the generality of mankind in every situation are directed by their interest, or by what they esteem such, and they find some salvo to reconcile it to their notions of duty. In the point we are discussing, there is much to be said on that side which the interest of the ministry inclines to. The arguments for war carry along

the body of the people, who are losers by it. It is not surprising they should convince the ministry, who are generally men of high spirit, and who are gainers by it.

Members of parliament come in for their share of patronage, and are therefore all in some degree under the same bias.

Thirdly: The foreign princes who have been advanced to our throne for a century past, have brought along with them a predilection for foreign politics and wars. King William's ruling passion was resentment against the French monarch. Our two first sovereigns of the Hanoverian family retained a partial favour for their continental dominions, a sentiment in itself rather commendable, but improper for a British King, and tending to involve us in alliances and contests, from which we ought to have kept ourselves disengaged. Our present sovereign is exempt from the suspicion of any such bias; but the prejudice in favour of the system introduced by his predecessors is not yet worn away. Opinions embraced by party are obstinately retained, and instilled by education into the tender minds of youth, and transmitted to a new genera-

tion. Our ancestors, who exerted themselves gloriously in the cause of liberty, at the revolution, regarded with too much favour the measures which followed that happy event. Their posterity imbibed the same sentiments. They are now weakened, but not yet obliterated.

Fourthly : Our insular situation exempts us from feeling the more dreadful calamities of war. The invasion of this island by a foreign force is an undertaking of much difficulty and danger. It has not been attempted in any of our late wars, nor is it much dreaded in future wars. The protection which our situation affords us might generally enable us to maintain peace : in fact it only increases the frequency of our wars, which we engage in more readily because we expect to suffer but little.

The system of funding produces a like effect. It renders the burthens of war at present light, and reserves them in a great measure for posterity.

Such are the causes of our readiness to engage in war. It suits the high spirit of the nation. It advances the interest of many individuals, and especially it advances the in-

terest of the minister. Our foreign sovereigns have cherished prejudices in favour of foreign politics. Our insular situation and our system of funding alleviate its calamities and burthens.

PART III.

It remains to offer some remarks upon the present appearance of a rupture with Spain.

The object of the contest is itself of a trivial nature. A branch of trade has been attempted by a few private adventurers, in the remotest part of the globe. It appears from the accounts* which have been published of some of these voyages, that it can never be carried to any considerable extent. The only article it furnishes is furs, and those in so small quantity as only to supply a few cargoes in a season. If these be anticipated, the voyage proves entirely abortive. For a trade so confined and so precarious, a very long and dangerous voyage must be undertaken, and all the perils

* Dickson and Portlock's Voyage.

which attend an intercourse with savage nations, sustained. A trade so circumstanced will probably be abandoned after a few trials. It certainly can never become a national object. That nation which possesses settlements in the vicinity, must carry it on with superior advantages ; and, extravagant as we sometimes are in regard to settlements, it may be hoped we shall not be so absurd as to establish one for its accommodation.

It was observed in parliament, that the southern whale fishery might be objected to upon the same principle, and must be abandoned if the Spanish claim be admitted in its full extent. It was not said that any obstruction had been given, or any objection made to it. The mentioning of it leads us to estimate the value of that fishery. Our whale fisheries have been long supported by bounties, and are still so supported. The propriety of continuing these bounties is questionable. If the trade will support itself without them, they are impositions on the public, and ought to be withdrawn. If the trade, after a long trial, still requires the aid of bounties, it is a losing one to the nation, and ought to be aban-

doned. The proper object of bounties is to encourage new branches of commerce and manufacture, and to enable the undertakers to surmount the peculiar difficulties which attend adventures not yet fully understood. The term of their continuance may vary with circumstances, and sometimes it may be justifiable to prolong the original term ; but still it ought to have its limit. If, after a trial of half a century, the trade will not stand without a bounty, it ought to be left to its fate. At least, when a trade is liable to such strong objections, and can be more conveniently prosecuted in its nearer branches, we may be indifferent about its more remote ones.

Since the objects of contest are trivial, the only plea for going to war is the point of national honour. Under such circumstances our conduct ought to be moderate. We should be careful of provoking war by an imperious manner ; and we should be willing to accommodate differences upon easy terms.

We sometimes observe private persons going to law about a subject of no value, which neither will yield up the right to, and incurring expences which their fortunes are

unable to bear. They are derided by their neighbours for their folly. The lawyers smile, and carry off the gain.

The Spaniards have detained some of our ships. It is generally believed they are willing to restore them, and indemnify the proprietors for their detention. If they do this, they repair the national insult in as ample a manner as is ever done between equal and independent nations. If they can verify any sufficient cause of detention, we have no right to exact so much. We would not grant so much under similar circumstances. We would insist that negociation should precede redress, and detain the prizes till the grounds which occasioned the capture were finally discussed.

It appears that the vessels seized by the Spaniards, were attempting a settlement upon a part of the coast which they claimed as their property ; that the adventurers were bargaining with the natives for *an exclusive trade* ; and that they navigated occasionally under a foreign flag. It is asserted by the captor, that a foreign commission of a hostile nature was found among their papers.

Without entering into an examination of the justice of the Spanish claim, we must remark the impropriety of permitting private traders to engage in such projects, and take possession of countries in the King's name at their pleasure. Persons engaged in such enterprizes are generally of rash and headstrong characters, and will embroil us in unnecessary quarrels. If the law permits this, it ought to be altered. If the charter of the East India Company authorises such adventures, this power ought to be refused, or modified, when a new charter is granted ; and, in the meantime, the controlling power of government is strong enough to prevent its improper exertion.

The claim of Spain for an exclusive right of settling upon a certain part of the coast, is a proper subject of negociation ; and, in a matter of so little value to us, the negociation may be easy. We need be little solicitous of the precise situation of the line which bounds their claims, in a country where we never ought to settle.

The claim of property, as founded upon discovery without settlement, is absurd in the

extreme: yet it has often been adopted in treaties among European nations, and by Britain in particular, as an incontrovertible principle. It might be wished that a code of public laws were established, by general consent, among the maritime powers of Europe, for deciding the several points which are apt to give rise to contests, in regard to foreign possessions; what constitutes settlement; how far the property extends from the place of actual settlement; and what shall be construed as amounting to dereliction. But these, and other points of a like kind, are still vague; and, until they be precisely determined, which is not likely to happen soon, we shall act wisely to compromise the disputes which arise, according to seasons and circumstances, rather than to aim at compelling all foreign states, by a high hand, to accede to what laws we please to prescribe.

If a foreign state asserts ill-grounded, or even absurd pretensions, this is no good reason for going to war, so long as these pretensions are harmless. The Pope formerly deposed kings, and disposed of their dominions; and, at the æra of our great discoveries, he granted the

dominion of the east to Portugal, and of the western world to Spain. He has not yet, as far as we know, formally renounced any of these prerogatives : yet no nation goes to war with him on that account. The King of Britain styles himself King of France, and the French monarch gives himself no concern.

In all our modern treaties, at the same time that the articles of real importance are laid down, a general one is inserted, by which the claims and rights of all parties not determined by the treaty are reserved upon their former footing. The notion of waging war in order to bring every point to an exact decision is a foolish one. The peace which terminates the war will be concluded as all former treaties of peace have been, and leave many points unsettled. We may resolve, when we draw the sword, never to sheath it till we have obtained our aim. We have done so before. We did it in the war regarding the Spanish succession. We did it in the war which arose from the Spanish claim of searching our ships. The issue of these wars it is unnecessary to repeat.

We meet with instances, and recent ones,

where an aspiring prince has revived claims that have lain long dormant, to obtain a pretext for attacking his weaker neighbour. Shall we say that want of precision in the treaties, which ascertained the rights of the respective states, was the cause of the war; and that peace would have been the consequence of a more exact determination? If any person think so, he is unfit to be reasoned with upon political subjects.

The notion of obtaining payment from Spain of the expences of our present armament is altogether vain. No such redress has been obtained in any modern war. If we search for an example of it, we shall need to recur to the glorious ages of the Roman republic. The demand is of so humiliating a nature, that no nation will listen to it till they are reduced to the last extremity of weakness. The most sanguine imagination cannot expect to reduce them to that state in one campaign. The millions which we spend every year must therefore be accumulated, and the amount exacted, before we agree to any terms of peace. This is a demand which Spain, while it is able to fight, will never be willing, and when it can

fight no longer, it will not be able, to discharge.

Beside our general propensity to war, the causes of which have been already considered, there are some circumstances peculiar to the present juncture, which raise the hopes and enflame the spirits of the public.

We are animated by the success of our late negociation with France relating to the affairs of Holland. We talked on that occasion in a high tone, such as independent states do not easily brook. Yet France yielded to our remonstrances. We believe that this is the only proper manner of negotiating, and will always be successful. The circumstances of France which occasioned the success of our negociation were extremely peculiar;—the finances deranged, the power of the sovereign almost annihilated, and the body of the nation engaged in a great design, to which war was altogether adverse. That style of conduct which we call spirited, but which the state it is addressed to considers as insolent, will not generally succeed. It would irritate us; it must irritate them, and provoke war to gratify national pride, without any national object.

Spain has not the same impetuosity of temper as Britain, but she is no less haughty, though her haughtiness is of a cooler kind. To involve ourselves in war with any nation, by treating them in a manner they will not bear, is a folly of the same nature, but much superior in degree, to that of quarrelling with every person around us, by behaviour purposely offensive to their respective tempers.

Spain, it is thought, can at present receive no assistance from her ordinary ally, and being much inferior to Britain in naval strength, when alone, must soon be reduced to sue for peace on our own terms. Like hopes are entertained at the commencement of every war, and never more, nor seemingly upon better grounds, than at the commencement of the late war with our colonies. It was hardly thought they would have dared to oppose our fleets and armies, far less that they would frustrate all our efforts, and finally establish their independence. Every page of history, ancient and modern, affords lessons, which are not listened to, of the precarious events of military operations, and the fluctuations in the political connections of nations. The new

constitution of France at present hangs upon a pin, which the slightest accident may overturn; and it will hardly be supposed more incredible at present, that within a year that country may be in firm alliance with Spain, than it was a year ago, that her public affairs should be now in their present situation. If all the success we hope for attend us, what do we gain by it? Our Gazettes will be filled with our victories, our towns illuminated, and Spain will yield us some useless claims. This is all we shall probably gain for the blood of thousands, and the expenditure of millions. Do we expect to strip them of their South American settlements, and obtain possession of the rich treasures of Potosi? Those who understand the interest of their country best, will not be dissatisfied in knowing that such projects are attended with insurmountable difficulties. If we obtained the prize, which it is more than probable we never should, it would contribute as little to advance the prosperity of Britain, as the possession of these countries has done to the prosperity of the Spanish monarchy. Perhaps we might wrest from them some of their islands in the West

Indies. This would be a more valuable and more practicable acquisition, and it is the utmost advantage that can rationally be expected. Let this be estimated as high as it will bear; it will not compensate the twentieth part of the certain expence: let the difficulties and risks be estimated also, and the argument in favour of war, from that expectation, will amount to little.

THE foregoing reflections are offered to the public by an obscure individual, alike unconnected with those in administration, and those in opposition, and under no bias to praise or blame any party or set of men whatever. He is conscious of no motive but a sense of his duty as a citizen, and as a man. Convinced that the spirit of the nation inclines on this, as on former occasions, to engage in war precipitately, and without sufficient grounds, he wishes, though he does not hope, to moderate her ardour; and rejoices to plead a cause, in which he believes the good of his country and the interests of humanity are concerned. It

is a subject which does not require shining talents, but rather plain sense, aided by a cool and candid temper ; neither is an acquaintance with the secrets of state indispensably necessary. Foreign nations, unconnected with the points in dispute, judge better on such occasions than the nation concerned ; and posterity, than the present generation.

It does not belong to a private person, unacquainted with all the circumstances of the transaction, to lay down the lowest terms of accommodation that ought to be accepted.— It is not even proper for a minister to do so, during the dependence of a negociation. But, when the sanguine temper of the public requires terms that cannot be obtained, it is the part of a true patriot to recommend moderation.

It may be expected that Spain shall grant an adequate indemnification to the parties injured by the late seizures, unless she can shew a reasonable cause for that measure : and it is to be wished that her claims were bounded by a distinct line, to prevent future contests. The exact situation of that line concerns us little ; and, as to refunding the expences of our

armament, it ought never to be thought of. It should be remembered, when these points are under discussion, that all we desire can seldom be obtained; that the expectation of obtaining the whole by war is precarious; and that it is better to pass from part of our demands now, than be obliged to do so after expending an hundred times their value.

If the detentions be the real cause of quarrel, it is so trivial, that there is little doubt of accommodating it by negociation, provided we conduct it temperately. But perhaps Spain is determined to go to war with us, and the detentions may chiefly have been made with design to provoke a rupture. This ought not to be hastily inferred, so as to precipitate us into hostile measures; but, if there be probable grounds for believing it, ministry are in the right for being prepared. If Spain be determined for war, it is unavoidable; but we may inquire into the motives of such a resolution, at a time when they engage in it under manifest disadvantages. So unfavourable is the juncture, it is hardly credible they can have formed such a determination. Yet we well believe they are inimical, and disposed to break with us whenever they can

do it with advantage, and in every war to join our enemies. Such will be their disposition so long as we retain Gibraltar. A British subject, under this conviction, may be permitted to wish that, if we engage in war, the loss of that fortress may be one of its events; or at least that its surrender may be one of the terms of peace.

The candid reader, if he be not satisfied with the whole of the reasonings above ad-duced, in which a variety of points have been incidentally touched on, will consider whether they be just in their principal parts. If he cannot go so far as we have done, he may perhaps admit the sentiments advanced to a certain degree. The author knows that addresses of this kind, although drawn up with abilities far superior to his, have little influence with the public, and that the national spirit at present runs too high to listen to the voice of moderation.

Amidst the uneasiness excited by the sense of impending evils, he derives some consolation from observing the gentle progress of pacific sentiments. The argument of the future conduct of mankind from the past, although weighty, is not fully conclusive. Many

absurdities, which prevailed for ages, and occasioned infinite evils to mankind, are now fully exploded. We no longer fight nor persecute for conscience' sake. Slavery is abolished in Europe; and, in the present times, a spirit has arisen for extending the same humane and wise policy to America. The revolutions in human sentiments and manners, which have taken place within two centuries, are amazing, and highly beneficial to mankind; but we have still many prejudices which, it may be hoped, posterity will surmount. Propensity to war is perhaps of all others the most irrational, and the most destructive.

Some men of the greatest abilities, both natives and foreigners, have inculcated and enforced doctrines favourable to peace. Their opinions are gradually, although silently and imperceptibly gaining ground. As yet they are chiefly confined to persons of a philosophic temper, and in retired situations. They are too weak to influence national councils, or be heard amidst the noise of angry passions, which national contests excite. Yet the French Assembly have formed the noble resolution of abstaining from inter-

ference with foreign politics, and from aiming at extension of territory. The progress of the human mind in an enlightened age, and the growing experience of human affairs, are favourable to the dissemination of these liberal sentiments. We may be permitted to indulge the pleasant hope, that posterity may enjoy the blessings of peace in a degree we cannot look for in our own days; and that nations, convinced of what constitutes their true interest, may apply their exertions to cultivate the arts of peace, and desist from the barbarous work of destroying one another.

POSTSCRIPT.

AN accommodation with Spain has been announced to the public during the time that these sheets were in the press: as this is yet to be completed by negotiation, and, as the general propriety of the measure will give occasion for much debate, the Reflections above offered may not yet be entirely unseasonable, especially as the argument is chiefly of a general nature, and applicable to our national measures under any circumstances.

ON THE

MANAGEMENT OF THE POOR.

THE following observations may be arranged under two heads :—1st. The proper objects of charitable relief. 2d. The best mode of bestowing that relief. The consideration of the extent to which relief ought to be given will occur under one or other of these general heads.

I.—OF THE PROPER OBJECTS OF CHARITABLE
RELIEF.

BEFORE proceeding to the specification of any particular classes, as fit objects for charitable relief, it is proper to premise, that the great mass of mankind in civilized society, the labouring poor, must depend for their subsis-

tence, and that of their families, on the exertion of their own industry ; and there cannot be more essential injury done them, than to induce views of having their necessities supplied from any other source. The reward of labour is more or less liberal under different circumstances of society, and frequently varies in the same community, being chiefly regulated by the proportion between the supply of labour and the demand for it. Humanity requires that the wages of the labourer should be sufficient to afford him a share of the comforts of life suited to his station, and means for rearing a family ; and, it is believed, that such competent but not excessive wages will ultimately prove beneficial to the higher ranks of society.

The proper objects of charitable relief are chiefly the following :—

1st. *The aged.* These always form a large proportion of the claimants on public or private charity. By the course of nature, a considerable proportion of mankind fall into a state of infirmity, which renders them gradually less fit, and at last altogether unfit for labour. It may be said, that a labourer ought

to lay up a part of his earnings during the vigour of life, as a resource for the infirmities of age. Some of them do so, and it is much to be desired it were more generally done. The facilities granted by the late institution of Saving Banks, wherein any thing that the labourer can spare may be secured, and improved to the best advantage, tends much to promote this object ; and they are, therefore, highly deserving of encouragement. It is evident, however, that, in many occupations, wages are so low, that the labourer, who has the burthen of a family, can spare little or nothing ; and, even when he can, he will often neglect it, and indulge himself in comforts, to the full extent of what he gains. Though this be wrong, still he must be relieved, when unable for labour, if he have not friends able and willing to support him. The extent of relief granted, and the time of its commencement, should not be such as to give him encouragement to withdraw from labour prematurely, on the first decline of strength ; nor should it, on the other hand, be so long withheld as to force him to oppressive exertions, for which his strength is unequal. The

failure of strength comes on at such different periods, that no particular age can be assigned, at which relief should begin ; but so long as the labourer is able to do some work, though not sufficient for his subsistence, a moderate aid ought to be given, and gradually enlarged, as his infirmities increase.

2d. *The sick, and those disabled from labour by accidents, of whatever kind.* These are entitled to a temporary relief, so long as their disability continues, but ought to be carefully distinguished from those who are permanently supported, and the relief withdrawn so soon as it ceases to be necessary.

The institution of Friendly Societies is now pretty generally dispersed through this country, and has received countenance, as has also that of the Saving Banks, from the legislature. The terms of these Societies are very various : some of them are limited to particular professions or descriptions of men ; others are open to all, if judged proper by the members already engaged in them. Certain contributions are required at entry, and annually, or at stated periods, and thereby a fund is raised, from which the members re-

ceive a supply, during sickness, or other disability, and in old age. Such Societies, when formed upon solid principles, are very beneficial, and would tend, in a great measure, if universal, to prevent demands on the public from the sick and disabled. But there is much difficulty in apportioning the supply to the contribution ; and not a few of these Societies, by granting more than the contributions could afford, have wasted their funds, and become insolvent. This has given discouragement to such institutions ; and it is much to be wished that a set of regulations could be laid down, which might serve as a general directory of what could be afforded. With a view of promoting this laudable object, the Highland Society of Scotland have lately circulated schedules, in order to procure such information from the existing Societies as may serve for the foundation of a general system of regulations ; and have offered premiums to those who shall furnish the best information on the subject.

3d. *Widows, left with families of young children.* The earnings of female labour are entirely inadequate to the charge often de-

volved upon the mother, in her forlorn situation, and such cases urgently demand aid from the hand of charity.

4th. Orphans, and deserted children.—

Some orphans have collateral relations, who are able and willing to contribute to their maintenance, though they require an aid. When this is not the case, the whole maintenance and clothing of such children generally becomes a burthen on the public, till they are able to provide for themselves. It is a heavy charge, but a necessary one.

5th. The blind, the deaf, and dumb, and those labouring under any bodily infirmity which renders them incapable of labour.

6th. Insane persons. As these are a very grievous burthen upon poor families, they ought to be kept in Lunatic Asylums, and the expense of their maintenance, so far as their friends are unable for it, supplied by public charity.

All the classes above enumerated, are proper objects of charity, private or public, and ought to have such a supply as may raise them above absolute want ; at the same time so moderate as to place them in a state of

marked inferiority to those who obtain their maintenance by their industry.

Connected with this subject is the consideration how far the character of the pauper should regulate the relief granted. Shall we grant an equal measure to those who have been idle, improvident, and intemperate, and whose present distress may be, in some measure, owing to their bad conduct, as we do to the virtuous and industrious? In the general execution of the English poor laws, there is hardly any regard paid to the distinction of character; yet, by a late law, such distinction is endeavoured to be introduced. By act 59. Geo. III. cap. 12. amending the poor laws, it is appointed, that, "in each case, "the select vestry shall take into consideration the character and conduct of the poor "persons to be relieved, and shall be at liberty "to distinguish, in the relief to be granted, "between the deserving, and the idle, extra- "vagant, and profligate poor." It seems proper, as far as practicable, that some distinction should be made; it gives some discouragement to vice, and may prove a small saving to the Poor's Funds. At the same

time, little, we apprehend, can be done in this way. The ascertaining of the characters of applicants, in large communities, is not easy ; and even when it can be done, the scope for distinction is not great. The most virtuous ought only to have a moderate relief, and the undeserving, when reduced to absolute want, must not be left to starve. At the same time, the relief granted to the last, ought to be of the narrowest kind, and such as to preclude, as far as possible, the risk of its being applied to the purpose of intemperance ; and should be withdrawn, if it be found applied in that manner. It is said that, when the determination of the extent of relief to be granted to a pauper is brought by appeal before a court of justice, no regard is paid to the character of the appellant. Should this be so ?

Having enumerated the cases which appear proper to be relieved by public charity, we now proceed to mention some others, which receive a large portion of the English Poor's Rates, and would prove a grievous burthen on our Poor's Funds, if admitted, whose claims should be received with extreme reserve, and, as far as possible, refused.

1st. Men in health and employment, receiving regular wages, whose claim is founded on their having a large family of children, for the maintenance of which their wages are insufficient.

It is well known, that a large portion of the English Poor's Rates are applied in this manner. The practice in different places is not uniform ; but, in general, when a labouring man has more than two children, he is considered as entitled to devolve the charge of the surplus number upon the parish.

Mr. Malthus, in his well-known Treatise on Population, has given an elaborate discussion of this subject. His doctrine is, that the constitution of human nature leads to an increase of population, which presses upon, and generally exceeds, the means of subsistence. In support of this opinion, he adduces examples from almost every nation, and every state of society. He remarks that the increase of the numbers of mankind proceeds according to geometrical progression, while the increase of the means of subsistence can only, at the highest estimation, proceed by arithmetical progression ; and even this can-

not be expected, for, after land is brought to a high state of cultivation, there can less be added to its productive powers by human industry ; that, therefore, the former must, in the course of time, exceed the latter, beyond any assignable proportion ; and that the checks which population undergoes from war, famine, and pestilence, are insufficient to counterbalance this tendency ; and that the defect of population sustained by these calamities is soon supplied ; that the only remedy for the evils of excessive population is the discouragement of marriage, in a certain degree, by prudential restraint, so far as to restrict the increase of mankind within the measure that an increase of food can be procured for ; and, if this be not done, misery and vice must inevitably ensue.

He farther observes, that, instead of any means being used to induce prudential restraint, the English Poor Laws hold forth an encouragement to early and imprudent marriages, by enabling parents to devolve the maintenance of their offspring on the public ; and he enlarges on the pernicious moral effects of this system, both in regard to those

who receive, and those who contribute to the Poor's Rates.

To remedy, as far as possible, these evils, he does not propose to prevent any rank of mankind from marrying, or at any age; but that a legislative enactment should pass, by which, after a limited period, all aid from the Poor's Rates, on account of a young family, should be withdrawn, and also that nothing should be granted for the maintenance of illegitimate children. If this be carried into execution, the labouring poor, having only the gains of their own industry to trust to, or private charity, (which he says should be bestowed very sparingly,) may be induced, in general, to submit to such prudential restraint, in regard to early marriage, as may avert, so far as possible, the misery which indiscriminate relief only tends to accumulate.

We do not implicitly adopt the whole of Mr Malthus' system. Some of its features appear too harsh; some of the facts upon which he founds may be stated too strongly, or are capable of being placed in a different point of view; and he does not sufficiently distinguish between the misery occasioned by deficiency

of food, and that by want of employment—considerations, both of very great importance, but not flowing from a common source, or necessarily connected. This is not the place for discussing at length the merits or defects of his system. It is sufficient for our present purpose to observe, that there is so much sound argument in support of its leading points, as to evince the impropriety of encouraging imprudent marriages, by the prospect of devolving the charge of the maintenance of the children on the public; and we concur in the propriety of the measure which he proposes. We would not, however, pass any censure upon what may be given in private charity. Such bounty is almost always laudable, and not likely to be bestowed to an extent which can prove detrimental to the public. In England, the adoption of his proposal may be attended with some difficulty, as the present system is so deeply rooted, that great alterations cannot be made without inducing temporary distress. In Scotland, the case is otherwise. Applications for public aid, on the ground now under consideration, have not in general hitherto been ad-

mitted, and we are clearly of opinion that they ought to be resisted.

2d. Men, able for labour, who allege they cannot procure employment.

Nothing has contributed more to the extension of human production, and the general increase of wealth and enjoyment, than the division of labour, which is carried to an amazing length in the advanced stages of society. It is not, however, without its drawback, and sometimes exposes a considerable part of the industrious poor to serious hardships. A demand for a particular manufacture may cease, from a change of fashion, or some other cause, even when it is an article of domestic consumption, and still more readily, when it depends upon a foreign market; and, in the present extended state of commerce, beneficial as it is to mankind on the whole, such vicissitudes frequently take place as depress certain branches of manufacture, and throw those engaged in them out of employment. A man educated to one mechanical profession cannot easily transfer his labour to another, and is generally unwilling to do so; and, in boroughs, the mo-

nopoly of incorporations gives some obstruction. A transition from handicraft to agricultural labour is perhaps easier, as mechanical professions require an apprenticeship, longer or shorter ; whereas every able-bodied man can do something at agricultural labour. However, the change is not made without reluctance.

When a man cannot find employment in the work he has been accustomed to, it is absolutely necessary he should seek for some other. Necessity will stimulate his exertions in search of work, and reconcile him to the hardships and privations which attend a change of employment.

If the distress arising from want of employment only bears upon certain branches of manufacture, it will not be difficult for the labourers who are turned loose to find some other employment, if they set themselves in earnest about it. Sometimes it is more universal, reaching at once to almost every mechanical profession, and also to agricultural labour. This is an evil of great magnitude, but it is an evil which charity cannot remedy. The hardship presses upon *all*

the labouring poor, and to relieve them *all* by charity is impracticable. Were it practicable, its propriety might be doubted : perhaps things should be left to find their own level. A fall of wages will take place under such circumstances, and the labouring poor will be exposed to severe privations ; but this can only be remedied by an amelioration of circumstances, which it is not always practicable, even by legislative measures, to effectuate suddenly. The tendency of low wages is, to open new sources of employment, or revive those which had declined.

Some palliative measures, however, may be had recourse to, with advantage, and every practicable measure should be adopted. Some gentlemen of landed property have offered employment to every person willing to labour, on moderate terms ; and, without derogating from the laudable motives by which, we believe, they are actuated, there is reason to think they may promote their own interest, by effecting permanent improvements on their estates, at less expense than they could do at other times. Associations were formed, a few years ago, in many places, in a time of general

pressure, by the aid of which every man, able and willing to work, found immediate employment, in some object of public utility. When such offers are held forth to the labourer, even upon low terms, there can be no pretence for claims of a different kind.

Times such as these are the most proper for undertaking public works, which employ a number of labourers, and promise to prove ultimately beneficial to the public.

3d. Mothers of illegitimate children. An unmarried woman, ensnared, and afterwards deserted by the partner of her guilt, is an object of compassion; and, if she be burthened with the charge of a young child, and receive no aid from any quarter, her case is necessitous; but, even in this case, relief from the Poor's Funds should be given sparingly and reluctantly. A widow, with one child, receives but little from these Funds, when the child is past the first stage of infancy—and a distinction should surely be made between the innocent and the guilty. If a woman have more illegitimate children than one, she may be considered as of an abandoned character, and an improper object of charity. We have

seen claims made by women, who had more illegitimate children than one, and whose demeanour was such as to leave little doubt that they were leading a life of continued profligacy. To support such objects is to afford encouragement to vice, and is a gross misapplication of public charity.

There is little credit due to the stories that are told by applicants of this description. A woman says, she receives nothing from the father of her child, who has left the place. It is likely he will be ready to devolve the charge of its maintenance on the Poor's Funds, if he can; but he may not be so barbarous as to leave the mother in absolute want, if there be no other resource open to her.

At the same time that we consider the three kinds of claims above-mentioned as in general inadmissible, it must be acknowledged, that cases falling under one or other of them sometimes occur, where the distress is so great that it is hardly possible to refuse some relief; and the Managers are reduced to the painful alternative of either deviating from general principles, or acting a part which humanity revolts at; and sometimes, perhaps,

there may be a legal obligation to admit them. We would think it the better way, were it practicable, to exclude them altogether from participating of the common Funds, and grant relief, in extreme cases, from a separate source, or from private charity.

II.—DIFFERENT METHODS OF CONFERRING CHARITABLE RELIEF.

THESE may be chiefly reduced to four :—
 Alms given to Beggars—Private Charity—
 Relief from a General Fund, supported by
 voluntary charity—and Compulsory Assessment.

1st. We begin with considering the worst of these—*Alms given to Beggars*. The objections to the practice of common mendicancy are very strong, and the public feeling seems sufficiently alive to them, as Associations for suppressing beggary are, in many places, connected with measures for relieving the Poor. The virtuous poor are entitled to a more kindly mode of relief. The practice of begging degrades the character, and, in most

cases, leads to every kind of immorality, in so much that it is with justice affirmed, there is not in general a more profligate class than common beggars. There are among them many impostors, though perhaps not so large a proportion as some allege. It is often difficult to distinguish the real object from the pretender, and detection of imposition has a tendency to harden the heart against every applicant. Even when the case of the beggar requires relief, it is impossible to know whether sufficient alms have not been already conferred. The earnings of those who follow this wretched profession are sometimes more than the wages of industry, and are more likely to depend on their dexterity in the arts of mendicity, than on the measure of their wants; and, when they receive more than is required for supplying the demands of nature, it is generally expended in intemperance.

Among the other evils of common mendicity, there is one upon which some persons lay peculiar weight—the offence which their feelings sustain from beholding disgusting objects, and the inconvenience of being teased with their importunity. We have

heard some go the length of declaring, (we hope inadvertently,) that they would give nothing to any Fund for relieving the Poor, till the nuisance of begging was fully removed. Of such sentiments we must express our decided disapprobation. The motives which principally sway with a good man, in bestowing alms, are the relief of the distress of his fellow creatures, and the prevention of the moral degeneracy which mendicity tends to. The removal of a disagreeable object is an inferior consideration. All, however, unite in desiring the suppression of mendicity; and, so far as this can be accomplished, the nuisance which some of the higher classes of society complain of will be removed.

We doubt, however, the practicability of putting an entire stop to begging. We know, that, in Edinburgh, where strong measures were taken for that purpose, and where a Poor's Rate is established, the success, after a long trial, has been only partial. We apprehend, that in this, and every other attempt for the amelioration of the state of society, a mitigation of the existing evils, and an approximation to the proposed improvement,

is all that can be obtained. Perfection, either in plan or in execution, belongs not to this state of humanity. We have done much, and may do much more, to remove the defects and enlarge the comforts of society; and it would be wrong to assign a limit to future improvements, or restrict our endeavours to promote the dignity and happiness of mankind. But it is unreasonable to expect that all which we aim at will ever be fully accomplished.

A part of the beggars who infest every district, come from other places, and have no claim for charity from the place where they beg. Some stranger paupers allege a cause for coming, which, if true, is reasonable; and, if their story appear credible, they ought to receive some supply for their present wants, and for conveying them to the place of their settlement—care being taken that they leave the place with all convenient speed. Others are vagrants, of dissolute lives, and proper objects of punishment.

Some beggars, who belong to a place, never apply for aid from its Public Funds, because they are addicted to habits of va-

grancy, and earn more in that way than the Public Funds allow. Others are pensioners on the Public Funds, who, for like causes, persevere in begging, in contempt of the conditions on which they receive their allowance. Both these ought to be severely chastised by the civil Magistrate. If committed to the house of correction, care should be taken that they do not find it a place of agreeable retreat, as it is sometimes said to be, but that they be subjected to such severe discipline, and fed on such scanty fare, as may deter them from following courses which are likely to lead them to revisit it, after they are dismissed.

There is reason to believe, that some paupers, who receive an allowance judged sufficient for their maintenance, although they do not beg where they are known, wander through the country, and infest other places by that practice. Their allowances are granted on condition of their abstaining from begging, and ought to be withdrawn if they be detected in begging any where.

A strict execution of these measures would go far towards the suppression of begging.

It may happen, however, in a large place, that some may be in extreme want, who receive no public allowance, through omission, or from being thought not entitled to any. In such cases, nature will prevail. They will beg, rather than starve, whatever regulations we may make. For this reason, we apprehend begging cannot be altogether prevented; and we doubt the propriety of refusing alms to beggars in every instance.

2d. *Private Charity.* By this we understand the alms conferred by the benevolent on poor persons, with whom they have some acquaintance, and have access to know their characters, and the extent of their wants, and to witness the manner in which the bounty conferred on them is applied, and the relief which it affords. This, as far as it can be extended, is the best method of relieving the Poor. It cultivates, while it gratifies, benevolence on the part of the giver, and induces gratitude on the part of the receiver.

Relief afforded by private charity, is not always limited to a mere supply of the necessities of life, nor is there any reason for laying it under such restriction. Persons who have

fallen from better circumstances, through unavoidable misfortunes, and are now reduced to poverty, ought to receive something more than a bare subsistence. The feelings of such persons are generally poignant, and ought to be gently treated ; and humanity requires that they be not entirely deprived of those comforts which habit has rendered in some measure necessary to them. But, in the distribution of a Public Fund, no distinction can or ought to be made in their favour : it is from the source of private charity alone, that any supply, beyond a bare subsistence, can be drawn ; and it is to be wished, as being less revolting to their feelings, that the whole of the aid afforded them were of this kind.

Many well-disposed persons have a number of pensioners, more or fewer according to their circumstances, to whom they give a stated allowance, or occasional relief, when needed. These pensioners consist generally of such as they have had occasion, from service, or employment, or accident, to take some interest in. Charity bestowed in this way is highly commendable ; and it were desirable it could be extended, so as to

reach every distressed object, and supersede the necessity of any other mode of supply. In a small community, where the circumstances and wants of the poor are known to all the neighbourhood, this, perhaps, may sometimes be attained ; but, in large towns, it is impracticable. There are many necessitous objects, who have no connection with any person in affluent circumstances, nor any means of drawing their particular attention.

Under the head of private charity we may reckon the support that is given by persons, in the lower walks of life, to near relations, who are disabled from labour, by age, or accident. There was formerly, in this country, a laudable pride, which induced a mechanic, or peasant, to submit to considerable privations, that he might be enabled to support an aged parent, or disabled child, or other near relation, rather than permit him to apply for aid, as a pauper. Perhaps this spirit was sometimes carried too far ; but, within moderate bounds, it is commendable, and ought to be encouraged. It is now considerably abated, and, although by no means extinguished, there is reason to fear it continues

to decline ; and to this the great increase of the number of pensioners on the Poor's Roll is partly to be ascribed. In England, owing to the Poor's Rates, this spirit is almost entirely unknown. Those who are able may be obliged, by law, to maintain their poor parents, and children, and perhaps grandchildren ; but, as it is difficult to fix on a standard of ability in the lower stations of life, much will in fact depend upon the feelings which prevail among them ; and, in regard to collateral relations, it is believed no legal obligation subsists.

3d. *Relief from a Public Fund, supported by voluntary charity.*

In almost every Parish in Scotland, a weekly collection is made at the Church, for the benefit of the Poor. This, with other funds applicable to the same purpose, whether arising from former savings, from legacies, or any other sources, is under the management of the Kirk Session. The Heritors in country parishes, and the Magistrates in royal boroughs, have a joint right with the Kirk Session in the management of all funds belonging to the Poor : but, except in extra-

ordinary cases, they seldom interfere. By act 1693, one half of the collections is appointed to be paid over to the Heritors, for the Poor, the other half being left with the Kirk Session, for necessary expenses and occasional charity. This distinction, however, in most parishes, has gone into disuse ; and the whole of the collections, as well as other funds, are left to the management of the Kirk Session, by whom they are applied, after some small deductions to the relief of the Poor. This important charge has been fulfilled, with scarcely any exception, with a degree of attention, frugality, and impartiality, which does much honour to those who discharge this important trust. In most parishes, the amount of these funds is very moderate ; yet they were till lately, except in a few parishes, the only public source of charitable relief, and they still are so in about three-fourths of the parishes in Scotland ; and, narrow as they are, have generally, with the aid of private charity, been sufficient to keep the poor from the extremity of want. A distinction is generally made between the occasional poor, who require temporary re-

lief from sickness, or other emergency, and the poor on the roll, who receive a fixed allowance; and the relief granted to the former is considered as less degrading. A full allowance, except in special cases, is not held forth; and, therefore, relations, though they receive an aid, are not considered as entirely liberated from the duty of supporting their poor friends.

In royal boroughs, the accumulated funds are generally more ample, and their management subjected to special regulations: at the same time, from the influx of strangers, and other causes, the demands on them multiply so much, that it is difficult to grant the necessary relief, without recourse to assessments.

4th. *When the Funds above mentioned prove insufficient for supporting the proper objects of charity, on the most moderate scale, recourse must be had to legal Assessment.*

The objections against assessment are very strong. So long as the alms conferred on the Poor is considered as a voluntary donation, it is received with gratitude, and they

are generally contented with little ; and the bestower feels the satisfaction which arises from the discharge of a Christian duty, and the relieving of a distressed fellow creature. But, when it comes to be considered as a matter of right, all these sentiments are reversed. It is paid with reluctance, and received without thankfulness ; and, instead of that kindly intercourse which ought to subsist between the rich and poor, and which has a powerful effect on the morals of the latter, they are placed in a state of enmity towards each other.

So long as the Poor are supplied from a voluntary, and therefore a limited Fund, the Managers are obliged to be very circumspect, both in regard to the admission of objects, and the measure of the relief granted them ; but, when a compulsory assessment is resorted to, they are very apt to become remiss and profuse, in respect to both. They are harassed with importunity, and exposed to deception, which they are less anxious to avoid, when they have an unlimited Fund at command, and are ready to yield to the influence of an amiable, but ill-judged, huma-

nity. In the Report of the General Assembly to Parliament, in 1817, it is stated, "that, "in almost every parish where a regular assessment has been established, the wants of "the poor and the extent of the assessment "have gradually and progressively increased, "from their commencement ; and that it "does appear to be a matter of very serious "interest to the community at large, to prevent, as far as possible, this practice from "being generally adopted ; to limit the assessments as much as they can be limited, "where the circumstances of particular parishes render them unavoidable ; and, when- "ever it is practicable, to abandon them."

A reliance on aid from assessments tends to damp that energy of exertion, which is the only source the labourer ought to trust to for supplying himself and family with the necessaries and comforts of life. If assistance be granted, on the claims of large families, or the allegation that the claimant cannot procure work, the effect in relaxing industry is direct ; and even a more restricted distribution of compulsory Funds may relax it, in some degree.

If, in consequence of assessment, a more ample relief be given to the Poor in a town, than they receive in the country around, the consequence is an influx of persons, who resort to the town in the decline of life, with the view of participating in what is given, in their old age. No person, of any age, or however mean in appearance his circumstances may be, can be prevented from settling in a town; and, if he can maintain himself any how for three years, without applying for charity, he gains a settlement, by the law of Scotland. It is said, his residence should be industrious, but no proof of industry ever is, or can be, required.

The bad consequences of assessments appear in their full extent, from the effects of the English Poor's Rates. These were first established by an act of the 43d of Elizabeth, which empowers and requires the church-wardens and overseers of every Parish, with the consent of two Justices, (which is given as a matter of course,) to raise a Fund by taxation, weekly, monthly, or otherwise, to any extent they please, for the maintenance of the Poor. Various other acts have been pas-

sed since, confirming and modifying the original one, and regulating the circumstances which give every man a settlement in a particular Parish. These, with numerous, and not always consistent, decisions of the courts of justice, have rendered the system very complex, and given rise to innumerable litigations, in which a large part of the money raised has been expended. Till lately, an industrious man might have been removed from a Parish, where he had no legal settlement, from the mere dread that he might acquire one, and become chargeable at some future time. This was a heavy grievance, as, when enforced, it prevented the labourer from exercising his industry in the place where he could do it to most advantage, or had other strong inducements to reside in, and confined him to his native Parish. But this hardship is now removed, by an act 35, Geo. III. which prohibits any person from being removed till he become actually chargeable.

This system has now been in operation for upwards of two centuries, and there is but one opinion in regard to the magnitude of the evils which it has brought on. Yet it is now so

deeply rooted, that it is hardly possible to get free from it, and not easy to amend it. At first, the sums raised were moderate, but they have uniformly increased; and, of late years, the increase has been rapid, and they now amount to upwards of £.8,000,000; notwithstanding which, the object aimed at, the relief of the Poor, is only imperfectly attained.

The extent of these evils is fully displayed in a Report to Parliament, in 1817, by a Committee appointed for that purpose. The management, no doubt, has not been equally bad in all places; and, in a few places, by the exertions of some worthy Magistrates, the expence has been much reduced, without depriving any proper object of necessary relief. But, in general, all the various kinds of improper objects above-mentioned have been admitted almost without limitation. Those who are unwilling to labour have been permitted to throw themselves on the Parish, on frivolous pretences; and, in many places, the pernicious practice of supplying the insufficiency of common wages by an allowance from the Poor's Rates has been had recourse to: thus degrading almost every labourer to the

character of a pauper, and affording labour to one part of the community, below its natural rate, at the expence of another.

The bad consequences which have arisen from the Poor's Rates in England, gradually increasing, now arisen to an enormous extent, and fully displayed to view, should furnish a salutary lesson to Scotland, where that system has only been lately introduced. A law indeed was passed by the Scotch Parliament, in the year 1579, about twenty years before the act 43d of Elizabeth, enacting, that while idle and viciously inclined persons, calling themselves objects of charity, should be severely punished, legal provision should be made for the maintenance of such as appeared to be suitable objects of benevolence; and assessments are appointed to be levied for that purpose. This act is confirmed and amended by several subsequent ones, and precise regulations laid down for its execution; and particularly, by several acts passed in the reign of William and Mary, it is ordered, that the Heritors, Ministers, and Elders, of every Parish, shall meet twice a year, to make lists of the Poor, settle the sums necessary for

their relief, and assess the same, one half on the Heritors, and the other on the Householders. In royal Boroughs, the duty of assessment is devolved on the Magistrates and Kirk Session. It is under the authority of these acts that assessments are raised in places where they are now established. Practice has introduced some varieties, in regard to the subjects liable to assessment, especially in royal Boroughs, which have been sanctioned by the Court of Session; and one annual meeting of the Heritors and Elders is held, on the first Tuesday of August, at which the assessment for the whole year is imposed.

For more than a century after the first of the above-mentioned enactments, the whole remained a dead letter. The assessments were ordered, only in the case of a deficiency of other funds, and were seldom or never made. By the Report of the Committee of the General Assembly, 1818, the number of Parishes assessed, prior to the year 1700, was only 3; from 1700 to 1800, there were 93 more; and from 1800 to 1817, there were 49 more. By the supplementary Report, in 1820, there were—

Assessed Parishes	209
Not assessed	654
No Returns from	20

Whole number of Parishes 883

There were no assessments in the Synods of Aberdeen, Moray, Ross, Caithness, and Sutherland, Glenelg, or Orkney ; and the greater part of the assessed Parishes are in the immediate vicinity of England.

Even where assessments have taken place, they have hitherto been conducted on a more moderate scale than in England, both as to the selection of objects, and the extent of relief granted. In England, the sum given to a poor family sometimes amounts to fifteen shillings weekly : in Scotland, the average rate is from one to five shillings weekly, and this last is not given except in cases of peculiar emergency. In assessed Parishes, however, the amount, as already mentioned, is gradually increasing.

The Heritors and Elders are judges, in the first instance, both of the proper objects of charity, and of the sums to be allowed them. An appeal, however, lies to the Sheriff or

Justices, when a pauper thinks himself aggrieved, by rejection, or by being allowed too little. The Committee of Assembly, 1818, find “twenty-six cases reported of higher allowance than the Session proposed to give “being fixed by the Sheriff, on appeal to him “by the pauper; of which twenty had taken “place in the Counties of Roxburgh and “Berwick, where the Parishes are assessed, “and the other six in different Counties, (not “more than one in each Presbytery,) where “a great proportion of the population is employed in trade and manufacture.” They add, “that, in districts where the population “is chiefly agricultural and pastoral, and “there are no assessments, and, particularly “in the Northern and Western Counties, the “idea of increasing the Session’s allowance “is entirely unknown.”

In some cases, the complaint of the pauper has been made, in the first instance, to the Court of Session, or carried there, by appeal, from the inferior judicature; but there is not a single case of an appeal from the Court of Session to the House of Peers.

An attempt was made, a few years ago, to

obtain a legislative enactment, for rendering the decisions of the Heritors and Kirk Session final. Perhaps it is to be regretted that it did not succeed.

The rules for ascertaining the legal Parish which is bound to support a pauper, by the law of Scotland, are these :—Three years residence, without begging, though he receive private charity, establishes a settlement, and that whether he be a householder or a lodger. If he has not resided three years, before applying for charity, he is chargeable on the Parish where he last resided three years, or on the Parish where he was born, if he has not obtained a legal settlement elsewhere. A married woman's settlement is in the same Parish as that of her husband ; a child's as that of his father. Illegitimate children are charged on the mother's Parish, even when the Parish of the father is known. A widow may acquire a settlement for herself and children, by three years' residence.

In consequence of the insufficiency of the Funds applicable to the relief of the Poor in Aberdeen, the measure of an assessment has lately been under the view of the Public ;

and many respectable citizens consider such a measure, if not eligible, as being unavoidable.

THE DESIGN OF THIS ADDRESS IS TO ENDEAVOUR TO EXCITE SUCH EXERTIONS AS MAY RENDER LEGAL ASSESSMENT UNNECESSARY.

The Writer has a full sense of the charitable disposition which, in general, prevails among his fellow citizens. This is manifested by the large sums regularly contributed to the United Fund, whether by the ordinary collections or by subscription, and also to various other charitable Institutions, and the readiness with which they come forward in cases of special emergency; not to mention the extensive bounty which is bestowed privately. Still, however, something more is requisite. He believes, that the necessary additional sum is not beyond what the circumstances of the place can command; and is persuaded, if the evils likely to arise from assessment, which he has briefly attempted to state, and which the experience of other places has displayed, were fully understood, and duly appreciated, that the same persons, who have already done so much, would con-

tribute somewhat further to prevent its establishment ; and that others, who have hitherto been deficient, would come forward voluntarily, rather than be subjected legally to a heavier charge.

The chief argument urged by those who favour the measure of an assessment, besides its eventual necessity, is that some persons, though in affluent circumstances, have declined or refused to contribute voluntarily ; and that it is unreasonable that the whole maintenance of the Poor should be devolved on those who are willing, while others, equally able, bear no share.

This argument is not without its weight. It may be observed, however, that, in the management of the Poor, whatever system we adopt, we have only the choice of evils : no plan is without its drawbacks. The objections to assessment are weighty. The number of persons who refuse to contribute voluntarily, it is believed, is not very great ; and perhaps that number may be lessened, if the observations now offered be attended to.

Some consider themselves as exempted

from any obligation to contribute to the public Poor's Funds, because they give liberally in private charity. We believe that many do so ; and have already expressed our approbation of this mode of bestowing charity. Still, however, its range is limited ; and, as all the necessitous persons in a large place, or even the greater number of them, cannot be relieved in that way, a public Fund is absolutely necessary, and no person is exempted in conscience from contributing his share, according to his means, for supporting it.

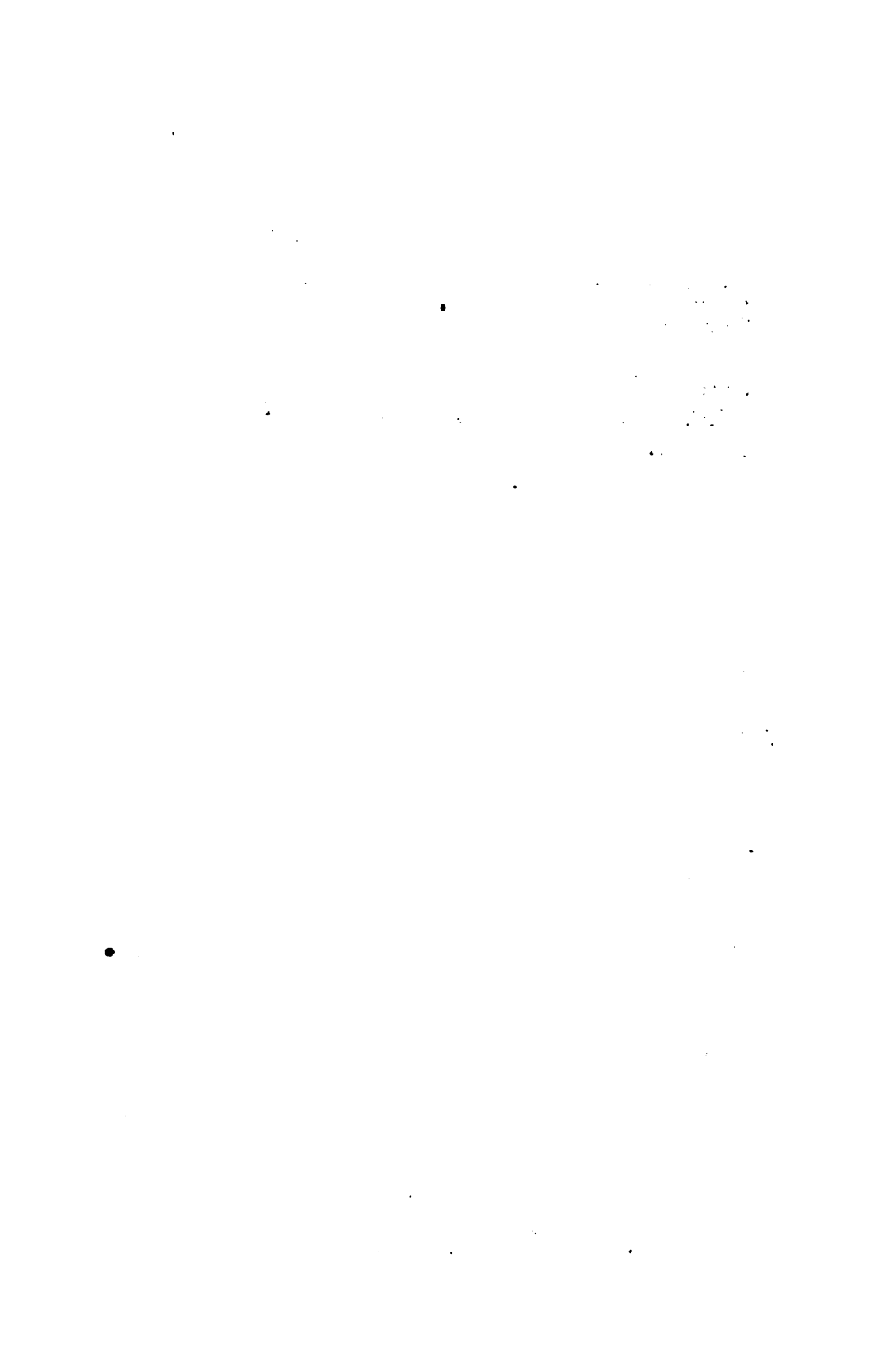
Some have failed in contributing, from mere inattention, or from an opinion rashly formed, that the ordinary Poor's Funds of this place are sufficient. The statements hereto subjoined will shew that this is not the case.

Others allege, as their reason for not contributing, the supposed misconduct of the Managers. The Managers have a most difficult part to act. Their duty is laborious ; their services are generally performed with zeal and assiduity ; they are frequently exposed to the view of disgusting objects ; the

demands on them are many, and urgent ; and the funds at their disposal limited ; and, no doubt, misrepresentation is sometimes employed to deceive them ; and they meet with obloquy from those who are disposed to cavil. The present Writer has been a Manager of the United Fund in Aberdeen, for many years, and he can conscientiously declare, that, in the conduct of their business, he has seen much to commend and very little to blame. It is unreasonable to expect, that, in the management of so complex an Institution, attended with so many difficulties, no error should ever be committed.

There may be some, we hope only a few, who, from sordid motives, are determined to contribute little or nothing to the Poor, and who will offer any reason, however futile, or, if it suits their humour, no reason at all, for their refusal, and give a rude reception to those who undertake the benevolent but ungracious office of soliciting contributions.— With persons of this character no arguments will have any weight, but such as apply to their ruling passion. It is fit then they should be informed, that, unless a sufficient Fund be

voluntarily raised, which cannot be done if they do not contribute their share, *assessments must be had recourse to, and they will be compelled to pay a great deal more than what, if voluntarily given, would avert that measure.*



ESSAY ON GOVERNMENT.

It will be generally admitted, that, in every important point which engages the public attention, and in regard to which opposite principles may be supported by arguments of considerable weight, mankind are disposed to attach themselves to systems, with a degree of confidence and warmth which reason does not authorise : that education, connections, peculiarities in temper and turn of thinking, have a powerful effect in adding to the force of every argument on one side, and diverting the attention from those adduced on the other. Truth generally lies in the middle between the contending parties : it does not admit, in their full extent, the favourite maxims of either, and perhaps embraces doctrines equally disagreeable to both. If sober and rational sentiments be proposed,

they are likely to be equally spurned by those who have inlisted themselves under the opposite banners.

These observations apply to the present political state of this country. A very considerable number of our fellow citizens complain loudly of public grievances, and have formed societies for disseminating principles which they hold essential to liberty and public happiness; while others, and probably the greater number, have taken an alarm at these proceedings as tending, under the pretence of reforming, to alter or subvert the constitution, and pave the way to anarchy. The press has swarmed with publications on both sides, wherein facts are differently stated, and reasoning proceeds upon principles entirely opposite, and generally conducted with equal acrimony.

An attempt to form rational principles of government, founded upon the great basis of humanity and public happiness, and applied to the circumstances under which we live, is a commendable but difficult task. Amidst the various springs which bias the human judgment, no man, without arrogance, can

claim an exemption from prejudice. But an honest inquirer after truth may expect to succeed in some degree ; and even partial success may be attended with some advantages.

An inquiry into this subject involves the discussion of several questions of great extent and importance.—What is the origin of government? Upon what principles is the authority of government established, and the duty of submission founded? What is the end of government? What is the best form of government? Does this question admit of a general answer, or is it modified by national characters and circumstances? What regard is due to the established government under which the State prospers, although it be acknowledged in some respects imperfect? What degree of unsoundness in the constitution, or of mal-administration, is required to justify such measures of opposition on the part of the subject, as either directly or in their consequences tend to its subversion? While improvement in our constitution implies alteration, and alteration may lead to subversion ; how shall we attain the advantages of the one, without being exposed to the hazards of the

other? What is the part which citizens in different stations ought to act, who, convinced of the general goodness and partial defects of our constitution, seek to preserve the one and correct the other?

WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF GOVERNMENT?

This question, when distinguished from the following one, can only be considered in a historical point of view. It does not inquire into the principles which enforce the authority of government upon the conscience, but into those from which the various governments that exist among nations have actually originated.

If we were to consider it in the former point of view, different answers would be given, according to the systems maintained by different men, which would not perhaps apply to any one subsisting government. Those who maintained the unalienable rights of the people would answer, that legitimate government could only be founded upon general consent, and that every other kind was an unjust invasion of the rights of men, and ought to

be resisted. Those (if there be still any such) who adhere to the doctrine of hereditary right, would tell us that all authority was usurpation, except in the hands of the vicegerent of God, who derived his title from his lineage. Desire the one to point out when and where the universal consent was given, the other to trace the lineage of the Sovereign to its origin,—they will find the tasks equally difficult.

The discussion of the historical question is attended with much difficulty, and does not appear of very great importance. Like the researches of the antiquary, or the inquiries of the naturalist into the formation of the universe, it opens a field for hypothesis, where much ingenuity may be displayed, but conviction can rarely be obtained. It is not the source from which government originated, but the effects which it now produces, that we are chiefly interested to know. An inquiry into the former seems rather a matter of curiosity, unless so far as it is connected with and tends to elucidate the latter.

The following are the principal causes to which the origin of government has been ascribed :—The appointment of the Supreme

Being ;—paternal authority ;—the experienced necessity of its institution, for the purposes of internal security, and defence from foreign enemies, (we may add, for the purpose of offensive war) ; and popular choice, founded on a conviction of that necessity ; the injunctions of religion ; the natural inequality of mankind ; and the successful ambition of individuals.

It is a common error to assign a single cause for an event which is produced by the combination of many. If we could trace any government to its principles, we should probably find several of the above causes blended, and that in various proportions, according to the rude or the refined state of the society, the simple or complex form of the government.

There is no reason, except under the Jewish Theocracy, for maintaining, that the appointment of the Deity in favour of government was announced in any open or extraordinary manner. God is generally pleased, in his infinite wisdom, to carry on the purposes of his providence by the intervention of natural or moral causes ; and, in the constitu-

tion of human nature, we find sufficient inducements leading to the formation of government, which, in every instance, where mankind have emerged from a savage state, have produced that effect. When we affirm that government is an institution of God, we have no foundation for the doctrine in any other sense than that every human invention, proceeding from the faculties with which the Deity has endued us, and then called forth to exertion by the circumstances in which he has placed us, may be ascribed to him as their ultimate author.

Children are placed by nature in dependence on their parents, subjected to their authority, and standing in need of their aid for maintenance and protection ; and nature has kindly implanted in the hearts, even of the most savage, powerful feelings of paternal affection, in general sufficient to insure that care, so necessary for preserving the life of the child, and affording him nourishment and protection, till he arrive at a state of manhood. The child, from his infancy, is accustomed to frequent control. With the first dawn of reason, he perceives the superior wis-

dom as well as power of his parent, feels the necessity of submission, and, conscious of the benefits he receives, generally yields to his authority without opposition. As the youth advances in strength and knowledge, and acquires ability to support and defend himself, the ties of paternal authority become gradually relaxed ; but sentiments of affection, respect, and attachment, generally retain considerable force. The submission under which the human race are placed in infancy and youth, and the habits and sentiments resulting from filial connection and obedience, have a tendency to prepare the man for that submission which is afterwards paid to society.

The dependence of a child on his parent continues longer in a civilized than in a savage state. He depends not only for subsistence during his nonage, but for education, so necessary to fit him for acting his part in life, and often for patronage and other aid to establish him in a creditable station. On this account, as well as from the greater prevalence of kindly affections, the relative attachments are likely to take a deeper root, and

be attended with more remarkable and permanent effects. This is one cause why mankind are more disposed to submit to government in an advanced state of society.

It has been said, that the submission paid to a parent during life is naturally transferred to his eldest son, and that this gave rise to government, which was at first hereditary and patriarchal. But, in pushing this system beyond the first step, we lose sight of facts, and wander into speculation for which history does not afford sufficient warrant.

The dispositions as well as necessities of human nature, in the earliest and rudest state to which we can trace it, lead mankind to associate in tribes : their union may be cemented by descent from a common ancestor, and is maintained by frequent intermarriages and a common interest. These tribes at first were small, and, being addicted to an ambulatory life, they had little notion of property in land, and little of that inequality which arises from the distinction of wealth and rank in the more advanced stages of society. This state neither requires nor admits of any system of laws or government, except of the simplest

kind. The following institutions are suitable to it and will be found very generally, if not universally, under it;—A Council of the elders of the tribe, who decide any differences that arise, and punish any crimes that are committed, and consult on measures for the safety or advantage of the community;—A Leader for conducting offensive or defensive war, chosen by the community on account of his reputation for courage and military skill, who is intrusted during the war with ample power, but returns when the war is ended to his place in the community, without retaining any permanent distinction. The best sources of information on this state of society are the accounts transmitted to us of the early manners of the people who afterwards conquered the Roman empire, by several ancient writers, and most fully by Tacitus in his valuable treatise *De Moribus Germanorum*;— and the present manners of the Indian tribes still subsisting and open to our examination. Both these agree in the points above-mentioned. The former exhibits a state of society somewhat more advanced than the latter, and

whose gradual successive stages we can trace, with some intervals of obscurity, to the present complicated and diversified circumstances of modern polity and government.

Several successive changes seem naturally to arise from the circumstances of society above described, and appear from history to have generally taken place.

The tribes become larger. It is a well established fact, that, in countries not fully inhabited, and where luxury has not been introduced, the numbers of mankind increase rapidly. Colonies may sometimes be separated from the parent stock, but notwithstanding this, the original tribes increase.

The union of tribes by voluntary agreement or by conquest gives rise to States of greater extent.

In states of considerable magnitude the meeting of all the elders in council becomes impracticable. Affairs formerly transacted by the whole must now be intrusted to a select number.

When a numerous tribe engages in war, the commander must have many inferior officers in the various ranks of military sub-

ordination. This introduces conceptions of complicated government, where jurisdiction runs through several gradations. The advice of Jethro to Moses of appointing rulers over hundreds, and over fifties, and over tens, seems to have been borrowed from military ideas. The same may be said of the Saxon division of England into tithings and hundreds, and many similar institutions.

A commander who has often conducted the army in war, acquires a certain permanent superiority. If the tribe be almost in a constant state of warfare, the habits of obedience become confirmed, and introduce a strain of monarchy into the constitution. The same person who directed their arms in the field will preside in the council, with more or less authority as concurrent circumstances determine.

When a territory is conquered, it will be divided among the victors according to the rank they held in the army, and the commander will have the largest share. Such, we know, was the case in almost every country of Europe, when the Roman Empire was subverted. The feudal system, which refers in

some sense the whole to the Sovereign, was a subsequent institution, the origin and progress of which are still with some difficulty accounted for.

Writers upon the progress of society generally distinguish the three successive ages of hunting, pasturage, and agriculture. These will be found often blended together, and many successive steps may be marked between the first introduction of agriculture and the state of highest civilization, attended with corresponding alterations in the state of civil government.

However rude nations may at first hold the luxuries of refined society in contempt, mankind become naturally attached to the articles which furnish convenience and elegance, so soon as they are known; and this passion animates the attacks of Barbarians upon civilized nations, that they may acquire by rapine what they have not art to fabricate. The same desires lead to the commencement and improvement of manufactures and arts, by slow but sure progressive steps, even without the aid of instruction from other nations further advanced in civilization. Between the

rude garment which the savage forms of the skin of the animal he has slain, and the curious robes which deck the luxurious Emperor of a degenerate State, there may be a thousand intermediate steps of invention exerted.

In the simplest state of society, every man provides for the supply of his wants by his own labour; but distinction of professions is soon introduced, and division of labour is extended with the progress of art and commerce. This is attended with remarkable effects in regard to government.

The separation of the military from the civil profession has an influence on the character of both. Men employed in uniform and pacific occupations have less courage and energy of mind; less enterprize, less bodily strength and fortitude in bearing hardships. They have more gentleness and refinement, more industry, perhaps more invention, and are more disposed to yield submission to authority.

The employment of a Judge and Lawyer also becomes a distinct profession. Causes at first are decided according to the dictates

of natural equity, without the aid of positive statutes or precedents. In a short time these decisions give rise to certain rules concerning successions, sales, and other common occurrences. These rules multiply and keep pace with the progress of society, and, when they become too numerous for the memory, are committed to writing and compiled into systems. Certain forms are found necessary for regulating the course of judicial proceedings. The study of these laws and forms demands the attention of a separate profession, and from that profession judges must be chosen.

In the earlier stages of society it is chiefly personal qualification that gives pre-eminence. The bravest, the most active, the wisest, the most eloquent, acquire the greatest influence, and assume or are elected into offices of authority. In a more advanced state there is another source of power and superiority which acts very forcibly, independent of personal merit, and often in opposition to it. The distribution of Property becomes extremely unequal, and power is almost inseparably attached to property. The rich man

commands the suffrages and aid of a numerous body of dependents, and acquires a proportional influence.

The influence of religion, considered as an engine of state, has been regarded as one of the most powerful supports of civil government. The spirit of genuine religion is congenial to that observance of order, and those exertions of beneficence, which government ought to promote. It is adverse to those dispositions of pride and revenge, those acts of violence and outrage, which tend to the subversion of government. The positive precepts, "Render honour to whom honour is due"—"Obey the magistrate for conscience' sake"—"Honour the King,"—when rightly understood, concur with the dictates of reason and conscience, and enforce them with additional sanctions.

Superstition, or false religion, whether artfully propagated, or arising from accidental causes, may inculcate the doctrine of passive obedience, and thereby tend to the support of unjust or tyrannical government. Under a different direction, superstition may tend to weaken or subvert the most mild

and equitable. Attachment to a foreign pontiff, in proportion to the degree in which it subsists, interferes with the power of civil government, in Catholic countries.

While various causes concur to incline mankind to submission,—while common interest and common safety render the establishment of regular government necessary, there is a strong passion implanted in the minds of some men to raise themselves to eminence and power, and assume that authority which the public good requires to be lodged somewhere.

Ambition is considered by some as the noblest quality of human nature, the generous gift of nature, which distinguishes those who are born to rule, from the plebeian herd. Others, and perhaps with better reason, consider this quality in a very different view,—as impelling the person in whom it predominates, to surmount every moral and every human tie, to invade the rights and liberties of his fellow citizens, and involve flourishing nations in devastation and ruin.

Amidst these opposite opinions, moderate men may apprehend that ambition is a pas-

sion implanted in human nature for wise purposes, and that it leads to the most beneficial effects, when properly directed and restrained ; but that no passion is more ready to transgress its proper bounds, and none, when it breaks loose, attended with so extensive mischief.

The ambition of a few has concurred with the necessities and inclinations of the generality, in the establishment of government, and co-operated in procuring one of the greatest blessings to mankind. The administration of public affairs is attended with so much anxiety and vexation, that the office of sovereign, or chief magistrate, is far from eligible to a mind insensible to the emotions of ambition ; and the laudable desire of promoting the public good might prove too weak a motive in times of difficulty and danger. But the impulse of ambition has an irresistible effect in determining some to make every exertion for obtaining power, and to employ, for that end, art or force, or both, as may most effectually answer their purpose.

The origin of government is to be referred to the concurrence of several princi-

ples. The discipline of infancy and youth accustoms the mind to respect and obey a superior ; the important purposes of defence and protection, and the security of property, especially in the more advanced state of society, require a regular system of laws and government. The precepts of religion inculcate obedience. A powerful passion animates a few to aim at the possession of that authority, which the multitude perceive to be necessary, and are disposed to submit to.

Although the generality of mankind are sufficiently disposed to submit to authority, when not exerted in oppression, there is a principle in the breast of some which spurns at all restraint, and disdains to acknowledge or pay deference to any superior. This principle is somewhat akin to ambition, and is, perhaps, the same, exerted under different circumstances ; for those men who most strenuously oppose subsisting authority, when they become themselves possessed of power, often exercise it with the greatest haughtiness and rigour. From this class of men, the popular patriot, or leader of opposition, is obtained ; a character highly useful for

correcting the defects of government, but who does not, in general, more than the conquering hero, deserve the unqualified praise which he receives from the multitude. The passions which lead to the attainment or to the resistance of authority, are seldom absolutely pure ; but both concur, under the appointment of Providence, to curb the excesses, and promote the happiness of mankind. History may afford a few instances of men, who, in the acquisition of power, only sought for the instrument of beneficence ; and some of patriots, who have acted from the purest motives of love to their country. But we must acknowledge, with regret, that her general record is less favourable to both.

We have endeavoured to unfold the principles in human nature which give rise to government, when it derives its origin from the State in which it is established. It may be proper also to take notice of that government which is imposed by a foreign and conquering State. As this kind of government is founded in force, it requires to be supported by the same means ; and the more so, as it is the disposition of mankind to reject what

is forcibly obtruded, under the notion of unjust subjection, apart from any consideration of the actual advantages or detriment which results from it. But, if the conquest be permanent, the origin of the government is forgotten in length of time ; the same judgment is formed of it, and the same submission paid to it, as would have been done, if a like constitution had been formed by the operation of internal causes.

The following question has been proposed. Have the various forms of government adopted in different nations, been systematically framed by legislators, and received by the consent of the community? Or have they been gradually formed and moulded by the concurrence of circumstances, diversified in their operation, according to the state of the society?

The answer to this question, in the earlier stages of society, is obvious. Men must have been united in society, and subject to political institutions of some kind, before a legislator or a senate could have existed capable of framing a regular system of government ; and, therefore, if government was ever framed

in that manner, this must have been done to correct the faults, and not to supply the want of former government.

The point of fact must be resolved by history, which seems rather to favour the latter, without entirely excluding the former opinion. The origin of most States is lost in that cloud which envelopes the earlier period of history; yet we can often discern a simple government at an early period, and can trace a progressive series of alterations and new institutions, as the condition of society advanced; and thus we have incontrovertible evidence, that many of the most complicated and extensive governments are not the contrivance of abstract wisdom, but the result of successive changes embraced or insensibly admitted in the course of ages. The rise and decline of the Roman republic; the progress from the condition of the Germans, as described by Cæsar and Tacitus, to the institution of the feudal system; the downfall of that system, and the various establishments that have sprung from its ruins, and especially the formation of our own excellent constitution, have all

been the result of gradual changes, and not of deliberate contrivance.

We have also a few accounts of governments framed upon sudden emergencies, perhaps by the wisdom of a single legislator ; and these governments have sometimes been permanent and successful. The most remarkable of these are the Grecian republics, among which that of Sparta stands distinguished, in every view of institution, celebrity, and duration. Yet the records of this remote period are too obscure and uncertain, to enable us to form a decided judgment concerning it.

Greece appears formerly to have been divided into a number of small monarchies. The power of their kings, probably limited at first, had become arbitrary ; and, being often exercised tyrannically, they were universally expelled, and popular governments of various kinds established. The period when this happened did not long precede the bright era of the Grecian story, and must have been a time of considerable civilization.

Among the modern republics of Europe, those of Switzerland and the Netherlands

claim the most attention. When they emancipated themselves from the yoke of their oppressors, they assumed systems of government nearly the same which they still retain. These constitutions, however, are not to be considered as entirely original. Previous to their subjugation, they enjoyed a large share of political liberty; and, though oppressed, their constitution was not annihilated, or at least not forgotten, and it furnished some materials for the superstructure afterwards erected.

When the English government was subverted in the last century, the spirit of republicanism generally prevailed, and every man framed a scheme of a republic suited to his own fancy. Among these, that of Mr. Harrington discovers a rich imagination, and has received much attention. Neither that, nor any other, however, was ever established. From the death of Charles I. to the restoration, the government may be considered as entirely military. The crude schemes of a constitution, held forth by Cromwell, were only a thin veil to cover his usurpation. The nation, tired with oppression, hastily restored

monarchy, and lost a fair opportunity of obtaining important meliorations to the constitution.

The several governments of the United States of America are formed, in a considerable measure, upon the basis of the British constitution, or of the institutions which prevailed among them under the British government; the monarchical part being rejected, and the federal union superadded, as a bond of mutual association and security. Perhaps the time of their duration is yet too short, to enable us to pronounce with certainty on their merit.

A more recent and more extraordinary effort for the sudden formation of a constitution, at present engages the attention of all men. Undertaken at first upon specious principles of the rights of men, and with no small appearance of equity and abstract wisdom, it has led to scenes of anarchy and the perpetration of atrocious crimes, unprecedented in the history of mankind. In what manner it will terminate, human wisdom at present cannot foresee. So far as the scene is advanced, it affords a solemn and impor-

tant warning to mankind of the danger of sudden innovations.*

Upon the whole, we may consider those governments which are progressively framed by the succession of circumstances, and improved by the experience of ages, as being most congenial to human nature, most beneficial and secure; those which are hastily framed by abstract speculation, as constrained in their principle, and uncertain in their consequences. The former may be compared to the steady oak whose roots are firmly inserted in the soil; the latter to the tree lately transplanted, upon whose stability no dependence can be placed. Yet, if the old trees be destroyed, or decay through length of time, their place may be supplied by others, which, if suited to the nature of the soil, may take root, and, in time, afford shelter and ornament. In like manner, a wanton recourse to theoretic government, is incon-

* Among the theoretic schemes of government, the constitution drawn up for North Carolina by Mr Locke, ought not to pass unnoticed. We are surprised to find, from a man of his principles, a system purely oligarchical. It was never carried into execution.

sistent with true wisdom ; but, if the former government be overturned, or irretrievably corrupted, we must embrace the measures which such an emergency requires ; and, if we consult the disposition and circumstances of the people, we may hope to do it with success.

UPON WHAT PRINCIPLE IS THE DUTY OF SUBMIS-

SION TO GOVERNMENT FOUNDED ?

Mankind are, in general, disposed to acquiesce in government, not only from views of interest and dread of punishment, but from a persuasion that duty and conscience require their submission. Upon what principle is this sentiment founded ? Or is it a groundless prejudice which ought to be removed ?

It is said by some, that consent is the only principle upon which the rights of government can be founded. This opinion is supported by respectable authority, and, therefore, well entitled to examination.

It is admitted that this consent was nowhere expressly given, and therefore must be inferred from some act which fairly implies it. It is also admitted that no generation

can bind their successors, nor can the majority bind the minority. Every man must give his consent individually, and can be bound in no other manner. And this consent is said to be implied by his residing in the country where government is established, and enjoying the protection and other advantages which it affords.

It is incumbent on those who maintain this opinion, to show that this consent is really and freely given. If they cannot establish the fact in a satisfactory manner, their opinion is weakly supported; and, if the fact can be directly disproved, their opinion falls entirely to the ground.

In order to establish consent of any kind, a knowledge by the person who performs the act from which it is inferred, that, by the performance of that act, he incurs the obligation, is essentially necessary. An oath may be taken by direct words; it may also be taken by holding up the right hand, kissing a book, or any other ceremony, the signification of which is known to the obligant. But, if a stranger to our customs should be desired to hold up his right hand, while another was

reading over a paper, and, upon complying, should be told he had incurred certain obligations, common sense would be shocked at the absurdity. Now, if it be true that not one in a thousand has any apprehension that he incurs the obligation of submission to government, by the actions, or rather by the passive conduct from which his assent is said to be inferred, it is no less unreasonable to urge it.

The notion of an obligation to obedience, is generally received ; but the idea of an obligation, not previously existing, being contracted in the manner above mentioned, is entertained by none but the few who study this subject in a scientific manner, and embrace that opinion.

As, in order to found an obligation of any sort, it is necessary that its nature should be known, and the consent really given ; so, in order to found a valid obligation, it is necessary the consent should be free.

Now the supporters of this opinion tell us, that, if a man be dissatisfied with the government of the country where he lives, he may retire to another ; but, if he continues to re-

side, he indicates his tacit consent. This consent, then, is extorted by the punishment of banishment; and government, which had no right, except what was founded on consent, has, previous to any consent, the right of inflicting punishment on such as refuse submission.

If the principle of consent be at all admitted, it cannot be supposed to operate till reason has acquired considerable maturity. A child cannot give it; a boy cannot be bound by it; a man has contracted friendships, and formed his habits of industry to the state of the country; he has acquired its language, and its manners. It seems not fair to tell him, "You must either submit to restraints which you are under no obligation to except from your own consent; or, if you like it better, leave your country, and your friends, and wander an outcast in the world at large." In regard to those who have active recourse to the laws of their country, for protection or redress, the argument of implied consent is somewhat stronger, yet by no means conclusive. A man perceives that he is subject to the authority of

the laws, and therefore uses them for his own protection. It does not follow he would not willingly dispense with the one in order to be relieved from the other. The greater number give no testimony of consent except the passive one of residence.

The supporters of this opinion maintain very justly, that it is reasonable mankind should submit to the laws which afford them protection and other advantages. The next step is that their consent is implied, because it is reasonable; and then their consent is the ground of obligation. The reasoning would gain strength by leaving out the intermediate proposition, and inferring the obligation at once from the reasonableness. The consent cannot be proved, and is only inferred from its reasonableness; and, as reasonableness is itself a valid ground of obligation, the visionary phantom of consent had better be omitted. *

* A similar abuse of language occurs in the civil law. *Obligaciones ex quasi-contractu*. Certain things, because reasonable, are presumed to have been agreed to, and, therefore, binding. It would be better at once to infer they were binding because reasonable. Some of these *quasi-con-*

The obligation of submission to government arises, we apprehend, from its tendency to promote the happiness of mankind. If our duty as men requires beneficence to our fellow creatures,—if it enjoins our concurrence in measures for the general welfare, and strongly reprobates that conduct which would be productive of great and general evil, then are we under the strictest ties of yielding submission, and even active support in our station, to the constituted authority of our country.

The obligation to support an institution necessary for the happiness of mankind, is greatly enhanced by the advantages which we ourselves have derived, and continue to derive from it; although it would still be binding, even if the case could be supposed, that it yielded us no personal benefit.

Man is born for, and educated in, society. Long before his faculties have acquired that

tracts are founded *ex delicto*. The perpetration of the action from which these arise, often proceeds from a depravity of mind, which affords a demonstration that the guilty person was far from consenting to repair the injury he committed.

maturity which enables him to exercise his judgment on the submission he owes to government, he has derived invaluable benefits from it. His education, his intellectual and active improvements, all the pleasure and advantages resulting from a free and safe intercourse with his fellow citizens, and his share in every improvement which the state of society has attained, may be attributed almost entirely to the existence of government.

The connections of parent and child, of husband and wife, are necessary for the preservation of the human race ; and certain duties result from these relations, as requisite for fulfilling their purposes and promoting human happiness. A parent is bound to maintain and educate his child : when the son has attained the years of understanding, he is bound to honour and assist his parent. The relations of civil society are almost as natural and universal ; and the duties resulting from it arise, likewise, from the nature of these relations.

Some relations are voluntary, and a man may decline them if he pleases, because he

can do so without encroaching on the happiness of others : no man is bound to become a husband or a father, but he cannot remain in any country without becoming a citizen, and yielding submission to its laws ; for, by doing otherwise, he would disturb, and might subvert, the public order and happiness.

It is not our present design to enter into a minute discussion of the foundation of moral obligation. Those who derive it from reason, and those who ascribe it to sentiment, agree in considering beneficence as a principal duty, and wilful mischief as highly criminal. If it should be asked upon what principle the obligation of contributing our share to human happiness, by fulfilling the duties of our station, is founded, perhaps the best answer is that it cannot be resolved into any other more general or more obvious. Every train of reasoning terminates in some principle, which commands the assent by its own intuitive clearness, and is not proved by means of another more evident.

Those who found the obligation of submission to government upon consent, do not rest upon a principle more obviously binding,

than those who found it on utility. That a man is bound by what he has once assented to, is not a clearer proposition than that a man is bound to promote human happiness. Why does an assent given at a former period, when the judgment was perhaps immature, become binding through the whole of life? If, upon farther inquiry, it appear to have been given unwarily, why may we not retract? Perhaps it will be said, tacit consent is only understood to bind us so long as we remain in the country, and that we are at liberty to leave it at any period of life, if we please. But the argument has no force, except upon the principle that assent once given is for ever binding. The argument may be stated thus ;—“ You have by certain tokens signified
“ your assent to submit to the laws of your
“ country, so long as you remain in it. You
“ are therefore bound accordingly.” It may be answered,—“ I indeed assented yester-
“ day, or twenty years ago ; but now I see
“ matters in a different light, and retract
“ that assent. I will remain in the country
“ and hurt no man ; but I set your positive
“ laws at defiance ; I will conform to those

“ of nature and no other.” The only satisfactory reply we apprehend, would be ;—
“ We have a constitution and laws established in this country from which we derive much good ; and you, by refusing subjection, do what in you lies to subvert it, and thereby hurt every man. Besides, as you cannot reside here without enjoying the protection of our government, it is reasonable you should pay your share of the contributions necessary for supporting it. If you do not acquiesce, you must leave the country, or undergo the punishment which our laws prescribe.”

The only unexceptionable part of the theory of consent, is that which allows every man the full liberty of leaving the country, and thereby withdrawing himself from subjection to its laws. We cannot be forced to continue a citizen, more than to become a husband. We hurt no man by declining either, and it is therefore inconsistent with the natural rights of liberty to compel him. He should be freely permitted to remove to any country whose government he likes better, or to one where there is no government, provid-

ing he can find it, and be mad enough to prefer it.

Those laws are therefore to be reprobated which invest the executive power with the right of detaining any person in the country, or which require a special license before he can leave it. This prerogative is exercised under arbitrary governments in a very extensive and rigorous manner. In the British government, it is limited in ordinary times to special cases, the chief of which is that of persons exercising certain manufactures which, it is apprehended, they would transfer to foreign countries. But restraint in this case cannot be vindicated. It is not enough that our country may be exposed to an occasional disadvantage by the exercise of liberty. The person who bids defiance to our Government endangers our most valuable blessings, and is therefore a proper object of coercion. The manufacturer who removes to a foreign country only breaks through a monopolizing regulation, the spirit of which is perhaps hardly consistent with the general rights of mankind, and which certainly ought not to be enforced by measures adverse to liberty. Besides, ex-

perience shows that these restraining regulations are ineffectual.

It is also oppressive to stop an emigration in the view of preventing the depopulation of the country. From the residence of men detained by compulsion, much good to the public cannot be expected. The object of government is the general happiness, and, if great numbers be inclined to emigrate, there is reason to suspect that Government is essentially defective in fulfilling its intention, at least that certain ranks are exposed to hardship and oppression. The proper conduct is not to prevent their emigration, but to redress their grievances.

But the great principle of public safety will authorize the detention of the whole or a part of the inhabitants in times of public danger. An embargo may be necessary to prevent intelligence from being communicated to our enemies. In this and similar cases, individuals must submit to a temporary restraint for the sake of the public safety. But, as such infringements of liberty can only be vindicated from the necessity of the case, they ought not to be lightly had recourse to, nor

extended beyond the time that this necessity subsists.

When an emigrant settles abroad, he is loosed, of course, from the laws of his native country; yet he is still deemed to owe it a certain degree of allegiance, and it is accounted criminal in him to engage in hostile enterprizes against it. If invaders fall into our hands, the foreigners are treated as prisoners of war, but the natives are punished as rebels. This distinction is agreeable to the general sense of mankind. A certain gratitude is due to that country to which we owe the blessings of our early years. We are not, indeed, bound to remain always with her, but we ought never to injure or molest her.

Man derives almost all his happiness from his intercourse with his fellow creatures, and the exchange of beneficent offices. He is therefore bound to contribute his share in promoting human happiness, and he is still more strictly bound to abstain from destroying it. He would more completely accomplish that detestable purpose by subverting government, than by all the atrocious private crimes he could possibly commit. His obligation to

submission, therefore, is the strongest possible. It no more requires his consent to complete it, than his obligation to abstain from rapine and murder. That refractory spirit which spurns at every kind of submission, however extolled by some as generous and noble, in reality arises from a pride little suited to the imperfect state of human nature, and not very compatible with the humane and benevolent virtues, upon the exercise of which our happiness chiefly depends.

When we affirm the duty of submission to be founded upon the basis of human happiness, it is not understood that men have always that object in view when they yield submission, and consider themselves as bound to do so. Nature has wisely ordered that the most necessary purposes for the preservation and well-being of her rational creatures, should not be left to the slow decisions of reason, but should be secured by principles of powerful and immediate efficacy. Accordingly, men are led by various inducements to form societies and yield submission to government. Some of these have been enumerated already. But the utility of government, although not

always the immediate motive to submission, is the principle upon which its rights must be supported against those who impugn it.

WHAT IS THE OBJECT OF GOVERNMENT?

"It was not because the Lord loved Solomon, but because he loved Israel, that he appointed him King over Israel." *

The object of government is the safety and happiness of the people. The justice of this principle is so forcibly impressed by the common sense and feelings of mankind, that it does not require to be established by reasoning, and few will be so bold as directly to oppose it. A good government procures these inestimable blessings in the highest degree; and even such imperfect governments as we commonly have, procure them in a very great degree. They are of such transcendent importance, that every other object should be accounted as the dust in the balance, and kept in entire subordination.

Human nature derives almost all its improvements, and all its happiness from society.

* Sermon preached at the Coronation of his late Majesty, George II.

The reveries of a few ingenious, but extravagant philosophers, in favour of a savage state, probably never brought home conviction to their own minds. Whether we consider the alterations produced in the natural state of the globe, which we inhabit, and the amazing increase of articles for subsistence and enjoyment, procured by the joint labour and invention of multitudes; or whether we attend to a still more important object, the improvement which the human mind has received from a state of society, both in its intellectual and moral nature; the extensive fields of science which have been cultivated; the art of writing, by which we become acquainted with the history of past times, and receive the benefit of their inventions, and which is rendered more extensively useful by the modern invention of printing; the pleasure arising from the elegant arts, and from the refinements of polished society; the cultivation of the social affections, and the virtues of beneficence and generosity, candour, gratitude, and friendship; the exquisite happiness resulting from our conversation with our fellow-creatures, under the influence of

those virtuous dispositions ; and, above all, that enlargement of understanding, which renders us capable of discerning a final cause, and conceiving hopes of a state beyond the grave, and lays the foundation of all religion natural or revealed ; we are struck with astonishment at the magnitude of the scene, and convinced that language is unable to express the blessings of society in adequate terms.

Without Government, society could hardly subsist ; at least it would lose more than half its value. Without it, mankind would be reduced to the continual necessity of defending their property and safety by personal exertions. When thus employed, they have little time, and as little inclination for cultivating other subjects ; and such a state is very unfavourable for cherishing the social and humane virtues, which form the chief ornaments of our nature, and furnish the most valuable sources of enjoyment. The inventive powers would be almost limited to the art of defence, in which considerable dexterity might be acquired ; but the exertions of the mind being confined to one subject, and very imperfectly assisted by the culture of society, the higher

degrees of intellectual improvement would be unattainable.

As Government is thus necessary to defend society, and render its benefits effectual, every good man, while he views it as directed to that good end, feels the obligation of submission. But, if directed to other purposes, his mind revolts against it, as insulting and oppressive, and he perceives his obligations weakened, or entirely dissolved according to the degree of the mis-direction. As every good minister will steadily pursue the public welfare, so every wise one will assign it as the ostensible object of his measures.

A respectable writer assigns another object as entitled at least to a share of attention,—the diffusion of political power among a *number* of persons, on account of the improvement which their minds are supposed to receive in the exercise of public function. “Forms of government,” he says, “may be estimated not only by the actual wisdom and goodness of their administration, but likewise by the *numbers* who are made to participate in the service of their country, and by the diffusion of political deliberation and func-

“ tion to the greatest extent that is con-
“ sistent with the wisdom of the administra-
“ tion.—While those who would engross
“ the powers of government tell us that the
“ public good consists in having matters or-
“ dered in the manner they think best, we
“ may venture to tell them in return, that it
“ consists *still more* in having *proper num-*
“ *bers* admitted to a share of the councils of
“ nations.”

That the motive of admitting numbers to a share of government, ought to be introduced to any degree of competition with the direction of government to the happiness of mankind, is an opinion, we apprehend, too gross to be deliberately maintained. It is sacrificing the good of the many to that of the few. If it be recommended as a means leading to the public good as the end, it is entitled to a fair consideration, and to every countenance which its tendency to promote that end can lay claim to. But it ought to be distinctly recommended in that point of view, and not in terms which seem to represent it as a *bonum in se*, and as such entitled to a certain degree of weight in the structure of go-

vernment, along with, and perhaps in competition against, the public good. If it be proposed, as a secondary end, entirely subservient to the public good, as the principal one, and only to be regarded when it does not in the least degree interfere with it, we doubt the prudence and propriety of bringing it into view at all. The public good is of a very extensive nature, and brought about by the concurrence of all the parts of a complicated machine, no spring of which is without its share of efficacy. They require to be properly selected and artfully arranged, in the view of serving their purpose ; and, if any other view of selecting and arranging them be at all regarded, it can hardly fail to do harm. The number of persons to whom political power is intrusted, can hardly be a circumstance entirely unconnected with the direction of that power to its proper end. If its tendency be beneficial, it should be recommended on that account. If not, it is better to lay aside altogether a consideration to which human prejudice is disposed to allow an improper share of importance.

— Upon the supposition, indeed, that the exercise of political function was productive of intellectual and moral improvement, we admit that the consideration ought to turn the scale, when the public good is no degree infringed upon. But it ought not, even in that view, to be regarded, except upon the supposition of such an indifference as can hardly take place.

Those who consider, in an equivocal light, the improvements which are supposed to raise the statesman or senator above the level of his fellow creatures, will be still less disposed to allow any weight to arrangements of government which are founded on that principle.

A court is not esteemed, by those who know it best, the soil where virtue prospers. The road to preferment is too seldom the honourable one of genuine patriotism. In the pursuits of ambition, cunning and base intrigue are often the most practised, and the most successful means. Even the intellectual abilities ascribed to those who conduct civil or military affairs with success, derive much of their renown from the admi-

ration bestowed upon station and power.—The management of public affairs is an object of superior magnitude ; but it does not always call forth or require greater abilities than what are exerted in private stations, and many ministers have acquitted themselves successfully who possessed no superiority of understanding, natural or acquired. The case of a member of a legislative assembly is, perhaps, as favourable as any that can be adduced, for displaying the improvement of human powers in the discharge of public functions. An able speaker in parliament is certain of distinguished reputation, and generally rises to some considerable station. He has, therefore, the strongest inducements for exertion. The subjects which occur for his discussion are often great and animating ; at other times of a nature that call forth the powers of comprehension and elucidation. Does a place in parliament exalt the character of the holder to any real superiority ? Not to mention the greater number who say nothing, or whose speeches are below contempt, let us resolve the question by attending to such as are justly esteem-

ed able speakers, and to their appearances on occasions which most highly interest the public. In what respect is an able speech in parliament superior to what any man of improved understanding could produce on the subject? The accustomed speaker possesses a greater degree of readiness, and this is the whole superiority that can fairly be ascribed to his station; and his speeches are often disgraced with more illiberality and party spirit, than any man of ordinary candour would give way to. Would it be right to increase the number of representatives in parliament, for the purpose of communicating to a larger circle all the improvement which a parliamentary station confers?

Small states give occasion, on the whole, to the employment of a greater number in public affairs, than great ones. But, if the preference of small states to great, be urged from that consideration alone, it may be opposed on the same principles.

The employment of an unnecessary number in public business withdraws them from other professions, and deprives the public of the fruits of their industry, whereof every

citizen should contribute his share. They are all *unproductive labourers*.* This argument may appear ludicrous, and where the number is moderate it deserves little regard; but the number may be so great as to render it an object of considerable magnitude. If our tradesmen spend half their time in clubs for the reformation of the constitution, such institutions, besides being in other respects exceptionable, become a heavy drawback on national wealth and industry.†

This principle, that the good of the people is the object to which government should be directed, and in conformity to which its structure should be framed, leads to consequences more extensive than are generally attended to.

* See Doctor Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, vol. 1.

† The nature of that public good, which government ought to promote, should be defined in a liberal manner. It is not limited to the number and diffusion of what are generally accounted, the comforts and elegancies of life. Yet to place no value on these is a refinement of stoicism, unsuitable to human nature, and what never will in fact be done. If they do not interfere with superior objects, the more of them we have the better. But the happiness of

The people under every government resign a certain share of their liberty and property, as the price of the security and advantages which government affords. That constitution is best where they enjoy these advantages in the greatest degree, and where they resign the least, that is consistent with their full enjoyment.

Under the denomination of governors, we comprehend all who possess any share of power, legislative or executive, or enjoy any public privilege, honour or emolument. These comprehend but a small proportion of the whole, even in constitutions where political power is most extensively diffused, and questions relating to the distribution of power ought to be decided, not by considerations that relate to those who govern, but by the influence of political arrangements upon the whole body of the people.

The supreme powers of a republic may

mankind depends still more on the enjoyment of all their faculties, of body and mind, in the highest degree of perfection; on the due cultivation of their active and intellectual powers, and especially of their moral nature.

be vested in a senate of fifty or five hundred members, and the appointment of a preses or chief magistrate may be found expedient. The functions of this magistrate may be more or less extensive; nevertheless he must possess some power superior to that of a private senator. If he be a man of abilities, he will obtain more influence; and, if he be a man of ambition, he will direct this influence to the prolongation and enlargement of his authority, and may change the constitution from its former form to that of a mixed monarchy. The other senators are likely to take the alarm, and oppose his encroachments; and, if successful, they may not stop at restoring the constitution to its former state, but may depress the power or abolish the office of chief magistrate. Here is a struggle between privilege and prerogative. The warm patriot embraces zealously the cause of the senate; he dreads the infringement of privilege, or invasion of liberty, and supports every measure against the magistrate. The rational philosopher remembers that both the magistrate and senators are governors. The privileges of the

latter, as well as the prerogatives of the former, are conferred, not to render them great and powerful, but to promote the benefit of those who possess neither ; and their tendency to this end is the standard by which their extent should be regulated.

The contest between King John and the Barons procured the *magna charta*, wherein the privileges of the Barons was the chief object ; yet the Commons derived considerable advantages, and they gained still more by the artful measures which Henry VII. employed for depressing the power of the aristocracy.

We must extend this reasoning a step further. A nation of ten millions is represented by a senate of five hundred, who are chosen by five hundred thousand electors. What judgment shall we form of the right of election ? Is it to be regarded only for the sake of the electors ? does it terminate in their good ? or is its merit to be estimated by its influence on the happiness of the nine million five hundred thousand persons, who have no share in the election ? If we adhere to the principles already established, the answer to these questions is obvious.

It must be acknowledged, however, that the case of the electors is entitled, in several respects, to a more favourable regard than that of the monarch, or the senate.

First, as the end of government is the good of the people, that government fulfils its end in some degree, which is directed to the good of a large proportion of the people. Even in comparing monarchy and hereditary aristocracy, if their effects upon the happiness of the people be equal, some slight preference might be allowed to the latter, as promoting the advantage of five hundred persons instead of one ; and, when we extend the case to a numerous body of electors, whose good, with that of their families, is supposed to be promoted by the government of the parliament which they have chosen, the object becomes of very considerable magnitude ; and a degree of merit is due to a constitution which is calculated for the happiness of so large a number.

Secondly, the principles of government are entitled to higher praise, when the right of election is not restricted by birth, but left open to all who possess a moderate property. In the free States, as they are called, of an-

tiquity, slaves and even strangers were excluded from all hopes of attaining the right of citizenship, and exposed to much oppression. But in England every man, unless remarkably unsuccessful, may obtain by means of industry, before he reach old age, the right of voting in some district ; and, admitting that the laws were unfavourable to the non-electors, that hope would operate as an incitement to his industry, and afford a solacement to his present hardships.

Thirdly, it is hardly possible, in such a constitution, that the government can be oppressive to non-electors. They are not a distinct body, nor subject to a peculiar system of laws. In regard to foreign affairs, their interests are exactly the same with those of the electors ; in taxation, persons of property bear the heaviest share ; and, in most objects of legislation, the same measures are beneficial to both. Besides, the electors are a body of such a nature that they can hardly be supposed willing, were they able, to oppress the rest of the people. Many of them have acquired the right of election, and are liable to lose it : they are blended with the non-elec-

tors by the ties of blood and friendship, and intercourse in the common affairs of life.

WHAT IS THE BEST FORM OF GOVERNMENT?

The merit of government is to be estimated by the security and happiness it affords. Where the rich cannot oppress the poor, nor the poor invade the rich; where every man enjoys the free exertion of his industry, and disposal of his property; where the laws are equal to every station, and easily accessible; where crimes are effectually repressed, and public tranquillity maintained,—the essential ends of government are obtained, so far as they relate to the internal state of the society.

Government also interposes to advance the prosperity of the State by regulations intended to promote agriculture, commerce, manufactures, and other objects of public importance; and laws referring to these purposes, form a considerable part of some modern codes. This branch of legislation ought to be cautiously exercised. It has often been conducted upon narrow principles, and has

counteracted the advantages it sought to promote, while it infringed upon liberty by the prescription of a multitude of frivolous regulations.* In estimating the relative merit of different systems, it ought to be rated in the lowest place. By securing the free exercise of industry, government does much good : by attempting to direct its exertion, it can do little ; and may do harm.

Government ought also to possess sufficient strength for defending the State against foreign and internal enemies.

Other requisites of a good government are durability and susceptibility of improvement.

Every branch of the constitution should be able to retain and exercise the share of power which belongs to it, without encroaching on the rights and functions of others. The whole should possess a degree of firmness, which caprice cannot mislead, nor faction intimidate.

* By a law still in force, the fashion of buttons to be worn is prescribed, and there are too many others in the same spirit. The continuation of these is a disgrace to an enlightened age.

It is also of great importance that regular and constitutional means be provided, not only for redressing grievances, but for introducing such alterations as experience may suggest, and change of circumstances require ; and thus bring the whole system as near to abstract wisdom, as human imperfection will admit.

These are the canons by which the relative merit of different governments ought to be estimated.

In discussing the merit of particular forms, principle and experience should go hand in hand. Human sagacity is not sufficiently penetrating to trace the consequences of political institutions by abstract speculation ; and experience, unguided by principle, might be loosely and erroneously applied. It holds in this as in natural philosophy : attempts to cultivate that science by theory alone, without the aid of experience, are now exploded. At the same time, the mere experiment-man, who possesses not the powers of arrangement and inference, is not likely to contribute much to its advancement.

It is from the combination of both, that

the science has been carried to its present state of perfection. The analogy holds in another point. From the mere theorist in physics, nothing but error is to be expected ; but every fair observer adds something to the stock of knowledge. In politics the case is the same.

If a person should give a decided preference, in every point, to that government under which he lived, he might incur the suspicion of partiality or timidity. It is not inconsistent with the character of a good citizen to discuss the abstract argument with freedom, guarded by decency. Candour, perhaps, may oblige a British subject to acknowledge, that some things are perverted from their original spirit, and that others never possessed that super-eminent excellence we are fondly disposed to ascribe to them ; also, that what was suitable to former circumstances, has now become inconvenient ; yet justice will compel him to acknowledge, that, after every deduction, our constitution has answered its essential ends in a degree which has rarely, if ever, been equalled by that of any other nation ; and that it is our most sacred duty to

hand it down to posterity, inviolate, and, if we can, improved.

The simple forms of government are monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy. These, with their several corruptions, despotism, oligarchy, and anarchy, have been considered by the political writers of antiquity. They have paid little attention to mixed governments, although ancient history affords us various instructive models of that sort. They appear to have had no conceptions of an elective representation; and none of the ancient commonwealths, with which we are acquainted, were founded on that principle.—In this important article, even modern experience is scanty.

The qualities desired in government are goodness of design, wisdom in contrivance, and energy in execution.

For securing the first and most important, the interest of those who govern ought to be the same as that of the people. In a comprehensive view, this holds under every government. The real interest of a monarch consists in the prosperity of his subjects, and the condition of the nobles is likely to keep

pace with that of the lower ranks of society. But it does not follow that the public welfare may be safely entrusted to a monarch, or a body of nobles. If they be wise, indeed, they will cultivate the public good as the most effectual means of promoting their own.— But such wisdom is too refined to be generally met with. Pride and passion give their conduct a different direction. Jealousy of encroachment on their rank and power, incline them to view, with an unfavourable eye, the growing prosperity of others. The sordid passion of avarice finds the most immediate gratification in measures that tend to impoverish the people, although their poverty ultimately tends to its disappointment. Even when the intentions are good, their exertions are more feeble than those of men who are directly impelled by the all-powerful motive of promoting their own happiness.

A competent share of power ought, therefore, to be lodged in the hands of the people, either collectively or through the medium of their representatives. But the exercise of public function by the people at large is impracticable, except in very small States ; and,

when practicable, is greatly deficient in regard to wisdom.

The extent of the Roman territory, at the commencement of the republic, was small, and not inconsistent with a democratic government. When the territory was enlarged, and vanquished States admitted to the rights of citizenship, such government became absurd in the extreme. To vest supreme power in such a rabble as might happen to convene in the Roman forum, was a monstrous invasion upon every rational principle, and was productive of the greatest disorders and atrocities.

If a popular assembly be unfit for legislative power, it is no less so for judicial function. It is clear, from the Roman history, that those who were tried by the assembly of the people, were condemned or acquitted according to the prevalence of faction. Even the State of Athens, more moderate in extent, and far more enlightened by philosophy, affords a striking lesson, how unsafe are the most virtuous and exalted characters, in the hands of a popular assembly.

These reasons induce us to prefer a form

of government, which commits the whole, or the larger share, of public power to a representative body, chosen by the people.

The next objects of inquiry are the *organization** of the electors; their qualifications, and those of the representatives; the extent and duration of their functions.

By the French constitution of 1791, the representation was distributed upon three principles,—extent of territory, population, and contribution. The only reason we can conceive for regarding the first of these, is its permanent nature. The others, either separately or united, seem to furnish a proper basis of organization; and, although they are liable to fluctuation, no considerable detriment is likely to arise for a long time from adherence to a system originally established on these principles.

The distribution of the rights of election in Britain between the counties and boroughs, seems arbitrary; yet it affords, on the whole,

* A term which the French have introduced. We borrow it to avoid circumlocution, as our language does not afford an apposite one.

a tolerable approximation, although with some considerable local exceptions. The proportion of representatives answers more nearly to the principles either of population or contribution, than if it were divided among the counties, equally, or according to their extent of territory.

In discussing the question of qualification, it may be urged, on the one hand, that, if the representative body be elected by the rich alone, the lower ranks may be exposed to oppression. On the other hand, if the right of election be open to all, as the poor are the greater number, anarchy may be introduced, and property endangered.

Amidst these opposite hazards, a moderate qualification is, probably, the wisest course. The constituent French Assembly required some contribution as a requisite in the character of an active citizen. The succeeding Assembly set aside that regulation, and laid the right of election open to the lowest ranks. This extension was soon followed by disorders and enormities of the blackest dye. Other causes, no doubt, concurred; yet the repeal of the qualification appears to have

been unwise, and to have had some influence in opening the door to those men who involved the country in anarchy and ruin.

The proper rate of qualification will be best ascertained by experience. As the British government has breathed a spirit of mildness for several generations, and has been only once subverted, by a temporary effervescence arising from other causes, there is no reason to apprehend its determination on this point to be considerably exceptionable. The qualification for a vote in an English county, is a freehold of forty shillings, yearly rent. At the time, however, when this qualification was established, the value of money was at least ten times greater than at present ; so that, while the nominal qualification has remained the same, the real qualification has greatly fallen, and there is not a shadow of reason to wish it lower.

In boroughs, the right of election is not determined by an uniform rule ; in some, it is confined to the municipal officers ; in many, it is open to every householder. Perhaps it would be better if reduced to uniformity, and attached to some moderate share of personal

or real property. But no inconveniences appear to arise from the present system, sufficient to justify the hazard of innovation.

Although the most obvious apprehension from universal suffrage is a system of legislation too democratical, yet, under some circumstances, the opposite consequence takes place. The lower ranks, being open to corruptions, may be gained by the wealthy, or by those who have the disposal of the public purse; and thus increase the power of an aristocracy of the worst kind, or of a profligate administration. It is well known that boroughs are often carried by dint of money alone. In counties, a candidate is seldom successful who does not possess a considerable share of personal esteem.

If the county and borough members be contrasted, without intending any disparagement to the latter, some degree of superior respectability is generally ascribed to the former.

If a representative, chosen under a moderate qualification, afford better security, as well against undue influence as lawless democracy, it also deserves consideration, that the opposite system exposes the lower ranks

to idleness and intemperance, and sometimes leads to rioting. These effects on the eve of every election are too considerable to escape notice, and too destructive of good morals to be viewed by a virtuous mind without abhorrence.

A much higher qualification is required in England, to confer the right of being elected than that demanded from an elector ; and it has been raised so as to advance in some measure with the alteration of the value of money, for the avowed purpose of securing a representative above the reach of corruption. The expediency of choosing the representative body chiefly from men of considerable property, will be generally admitted ; and yet the necessity of securing this by a high qualification may be questioned. The influence of wealth is strong enough to accomplish the end in every eligible degree, and perhaps rather requires to be checked than promoted. If the qualification of electors be properly rated, few members will be chosen from the lower ranks ; and, where considerable property is dispensed with, it will be generally in favour of superior merit. By our present

law, if strictly executed, the highest abilities would be excluded, when not accompanied with fortune. But it is well known they are sometimes eluded.

Other grievances are complained of, by those who are dissatisfied with the present system. Some of our more considerable towns, as Manchester and Birmingham, are not represented in Parliament ; while others, called *rotten boroughs*, now sunk into contempt, continue to be represented, and the members are chosen by a paltry number of electors, or perhaps nominated by a single person.

The first of these alleged grievances does not appear to be followed with any disadvantage, either to the community at large, or to the place which is deprived of the right of representation. If that right be established upon a basis sufficiently broad, so as to comprehend the interests of the various ranks of society, and secure an equitable and beneficial system of legislation, the great ends of government are accomplished ; and the places not represented participate equally in the consequences. Experience gives no warrant

for asserting that such places have been exposed to partial oppression, or even that their local affairs, when deserving the attention of parliament, have been disregarded ; and there is not a shadow of reason for supposing, that an addition to the legislative body of representatives, from these places, would be attended with any beneficial change on public measures.

Still it is urged, that these places are deprived of a right essential to the freedom of British subjects. Those who reason in this way, depart from the principle of the public welfare being the standard by which all political questions should be tried, and hold forth another of which it is difficult to ascertain the foundation, or limit the extent. We are rather inclined to deny every essential right, except that of enjoying the protection of an equitable, beneficial, and steady government. When any improvement is proposed, we inquire whether it tends to promote the public prosperity in a higher degree, or afford any additional security. If it does neither, we are unwilling to hazard an experiment, the consequences of which we cannot foresee,

for the mere purpose of bringing the system nearer to theoretic notions of equality.

The other grievance, that of insignificant and dependent boroughs, is of much more serious magnitude. The number of members returned by such boroughs may be fairly considered as nominated by an aristocracy, or by the executive power; and may be under the influence of an interest distinct from that of the good of the community. The only plea for tolerating their continuance, is that their number is too small to produce any sensible effect upon public counsels. If this be true, unprofitable changes are never eligible; but, if the case be otherwise, the whole spirit of legislation may be corrupted; and a source of perversion, so dangerous, loudly calls for redress.

In Scotland, the right of election is confined to gentlemen of considerable property. The most general qualification is an estate holding of the Crown, of £400 Scots valued rent, which, taking one place with another, may be worth about £200 sterling, or a hundred times the English qualification. We have no hesitation in pronouncing this too

high ; and, were it universal, it might lead to pernicious consequences. For reasons, however, already sufficiently detailed, the election of a few members in this way is not dangerous. The separation of the superiority from the property, and admission of what are called nominal and fictitious votes, is a worse evil. This is no part of the constitution, but an abuse which has crept in through course of time. It has been partly remedied already by the execution of the subsisting laws, and may be more effectually abolished by the interference of the legislature, without touching any fundamental point of the constitution, or affording a precedent for dangerous innovation.

The election of members for boroughs in Scotland by the town councils, who generally elect their own successors, has been much complained of. The number of members elected in this manner is only fifteen. We have no observations to make upon this point, but what obviously arise from the principles already stated.

In offering excuses for some defects in our system of election, we have not spoken of

virtual representation. We would not insult the reader by the use of a term without a meaning. A representative government derives its value from the beneficial measures it is likely to adopt; and, if these measures be secured, the imperfections and inequalities are venial faults. After all, they are not to be received with approbation. In an established government, it may be wise to tolerate them, rather than hazard the greater evils of innovation. But, in the original structure of the legislative body, they should be avoided as much as possible; and, if alteration be on any account admitted, it should be for their correction.

It is essential to a representative assembly, that each member should enjoy the free right of speaking or voting according to his judgment. The instructions of his constituents are to be regarded as counsel only. To establish the contrary, would entirely preclude all discussion and deliberation, and render the assembly no other than a register of the resolutions previously adopted by the electors.

The spirit of this government cannot be

maintained, unless the right of exercising their elective function return frequently to the people. Very short parliaments are attended with obvious inconveniences ; but, from very long ones, evils of a more enormous kind may be apprehended. When our ancestors fixed upon the term of three years, they appear to have made a wise choice. A shorter period does not afford time for completing measures of a complex nature, and a much longer one may separate the interests and views of the representatives from those of the constituents. The period of seven years, perhaps too long, was introduced in a manner extremely exceptionable. A representative body, intrusted with the rights of legislation for a limited period, prolonged, by an act of their own, the continuance of their power. By parity of reason, they might do it for a longer period, or for ever. This measure was so irreconcilable to reason, and so indefinite and dangerous in point of precedent, that we cannot hesitate to give it up to the reprobation it deserves. The pretence of the exigency of the times is insufficient to defend it. Such pretences may

always be held forth ; and, if they, whose power is continued, be judges of the exigency, the form, as well as the spirit of our constitution, may be subverted.

There are two ways of renewing a representative body ;—that which we have adopted of renewing the whole body together at stated periods ; and that of electing a certain proportion annually, in such rotation that the whole may be elected in the course of some years, but without ever renewing the whole body at the same time. The former method appears preferable. If the representative body should have fallen under any corrupt influence, or adopted any system inconsistent with the interest or sentiments of the people, the evil is likely to be redressed at the period of a new election. If a part only be re-elected at a time, there is reason to apprehend it may be brought over to the spirit of the larger part with which it is incorporated.

It has been maintained that the electors should have a right to recal their representative, when they disapproved of his public conduct ; and plausible arguments may be drawn from the absurdity of a delegate act-

ing in opposition to the sentiments of his constituents. But, as this evil may be redressed at the period of a new election, it is perhaps better guarded against by a frequent return of these periods, than by a remedy of a more violent and irregular kind. The exercise of the right contended for, would open the way for continual faction, and would give too much scope to rash sallies of popular enthusiasm.

The British House of Commons claims a right of expelling a member whom they judge unworthy ; and, on one occasion, resolved that the expelled member was ineligible during that parliament. This measure gave occasion to much discontent ; and, although this might be fomented by faction, it was very generally disapproved of, as dangerous in point of precedent ; and, a few years after, the resolution was rescinded. The law of parliament, therefore, as now declared, authorises the house to remit a member by expulsion to his constituents ; but, if he be re-elected, they are bound to receive him. The right, thus restricted, can be attended with no bad consequence, and seems to be

one of those which may be admitted or refused without any sensible effect on the public welfare.

Such are the leading points which reason, we apprehend, suggests, and experience approves of, in the constitution of a representative assembly ;—an organization, which comprehends the interests of every rank in society, and is under the undue influence of none ; a moderate qualification ; frequent returns of the right of election ; and the independence of the representatives during the term of their function.

In mixed governments, the legislative power is vested in several distinct branches, whose successive assent is required to give validity to any enactment. A constitution of this sort is adapted to restrain rash and violent measures, and to prevent any order of society from invading the rights of others.

We do not propose to discuss the comparative merit of mixed governments and pure democracies. It is an argument, on which, perhaps, no man can divest himself of partiality. A British subject may entertain a predilection for the former, and may support

his opinion not only by weighty arguments which have afforded conviction to some of the most intelligent foreigners,* but by the more satisfactory appeal to experience, on a fair review of the freedom and happiness this country has long enjoyed.

To desire the subversion of our constitution in the view of erecting an ideal commonwealth on its ruins, bespeaks a strange delusion of mind ; and a British subject is bound by the strongest ties to resist every such attempt. At the same time, a liberal mind will admit, that, if another nation has adopted a more democratical government, which has become steady through length of time, and proved congenial to their dispositions, and afforded a competent share of safety and public happiness, it would be no less unwarrantable for a citizen of that nation to attempt the establishment of the British system from an opinion of its theoretic superiority.

The aristocratical branch of a mixed constitution may either consist, as with us, of an hereditary nobility ; or, as in ancient Rome,

* Montesquieu, De Lolme, &c.

of a Senate, whose members hold their places for life ; or of an elective body, chosen by those of considerable property, and distinguished, by that circumstance, from the popular representative body,—a mode adopted by some of the American States.

Without engaging in a particular examination of the merit of these systems, we may inquire whether our house of Peers has fulfilled the part belonging to that branch of the constitution, and whether the share of power it actually possesses, be too great or too little.

The weight of the popular branch should predominate ; and ever since our constitution has attained its present character, this has been the case. The house of Peers has, in a few instances, interfered, sometimes with obvious propriety, and never with any certain detriment to the public good. It has never attempted to force a system of measures in opposition to the house of Commons ; nor, while our present constitution remains, could such an attempt be followed with success. There seems then no reason to dread the infringement of liberty, or the misdirection of public measures from the weight of the

Peers, considered as a distinct branch of the legislature.

In the time of Charles I. when liberty was endangered by the extension of prerogative, the house of Peers, in the spirit of patriotism, supported the Commons in opposing the measures of the Crown; and soon after, when matters were pushed to the opposite extreme, they attempted to check the violence of the Commons, and preserve the monarchial branch, when fallen too low. But they had not strength to accomplish this. They fell, along with the Crown, and the constitution was subverted.

But, although the power of the house of Peers be not formidable, their influence in another way may be unconstitutional and dangerous. They may succeed in carrying the elections of the Commons, and thus obtain an improper sway over their measures. This, it must be acknowledged, is a just object of jealousy. It is not however the title of nobility, nor the privilege of peerage, that bestows this influence. It is the natural attendant upon station and fortune, and therefore only to be opposed by measures fitted to coun-

teract the weight, or lessen the inequalities of fortune.

The prerogative of the Crown constitutes an essential part of the British constitution. The Crown possesses a share in the legislative power, and almost the whole of the executive.

The former consists in the right of a negative, of bestowing a seat in the house of Peers, and of summoning, proroguing, and dissolving parliament.

The right of a negative has at all times been sparingly exercised, and not at all since the accession of the present family. Theoretical writers have expatiated on the necessity of such a right, for supporting the crown against the invasion of the other branches of the legislative body, and rendering our constitution complete ; notwithstanding which it seems now to be dwindled into a dead claim, and will probably be never revived. There is reason to think that no such prerogative can be exercised in a mixed constitution with effect. The legislative body is too powerful to be opposed by a *veto*, or it is nothing. When a negative was exerted in former

times, it roused the spirit of the nation, and was far from contributing to support the power of the crown. The French constitution of 1789 reserved this prerogative to the monarch. Perhaps this was artfully done, that he might fall into the snare. He attempted to exercise it in two instances, and, in one of them at least, was certainly right. The enactment against the Priests was framed in the spirit of rancorous persecution. The *veto* incensed the multitude, and proved one of the immediate causes of his fall. In our constitution we may have something to fear from parliament being influenced, but nothing from its being overawed: we need not trouble ourselves about the dormant right of a royal *veto*.

By the right of conferring Peerage, the crown may at any time obtain a majority in the house of Peers; and this was almost avowedly done on occasion of the peace of Utrecht. Although the honours of Peerage have been conferred during the reign of George III. with unprecedented liberality, it does not appear to have been done in the same view. The remedy to this evil, should

it be deemed important enough to require one, is a limitation of the number of the peerage. Such a measure was once introduced, and sustained by the upper house, but rejected by the house of Commons.

If the power of the Peers be subordinate, there is not much to dread from the lavish distribution of Peerage in the view of commanding the upper house. It may, however, be considered, in another point of view, as an instrument of corruption. There is no measure, however, exerted for that purpose, that is more likely to disappoint its own end. A man may be gained over by that bribe to the party of the present minister, but the right to a voice in the legislature is secured to him and his posterity. The minister may disappoint an obnoxious commoner at his election ; but, if he cannot gain over a Peer, he must bear the weight of his opposition.

There seems to be some advantage in a pretty numerous Peerage. It must be more difficult to influence them ; and the greatest number that can well be added at once, bears a less proportion to the whole.

The Crown possesses also the right of sum-

moning, proroguing, and dissolving the parliament.

As the parliament can only be convened by a mandate from the Crown, if there were not other circumstances that rendered an annual session indispensably necessary, the power of the Crown might be extended during the intervals of parliament, and these intervals prolonged in the view of weakening its authority. This was done in the reign of Charles I. ; and arbitrary measures were exercised. This system succeeded for a few years, but could not prevail long ; and when it fell, it buried that ill-advised monarch in its ruins.

Laws for triennial parliaments, or other like expedients, may be opposed to a repetition of these grievances. But the accumulation of the national debt, and the present system of the revenue, render the subsistence of the government, for a single year, without parliament, impracticable ; and the necessity of the case secures its regular meeting more effectually than any positive laws can do.

As Government cannot be carried on, under the existing circumstances, without Parlia-

ment, there seems no hazard from the power the Crown possesses of dissolving it. A factious house of Commons may be dismissed ; but, if the measures which rendered them obnoxious to the Crown, be agreeable to the nation, the same men will be elected, or others of similar principles. Charles I. tried repeatedly the measure of dissolution ; but each succeeding parliament opposed the measures of the court with increasing vigour and efficacy.

The distinction of the legislative and executive powers is applied in our constitution, in a sense not exactly the same which the meaning of the terms conveys. But disputes about words are impertinent, and what it concerns us to examine, is the utility or danger of those prerogatives which are ascribed to the executive power.

Passing by some points of less importance, the prerogatives which chiefly claim our attention are the power of peace and war, and of negotiating treaties, the charge of the public revenue, the disposal of offices of trust and emolument, and the command of the military power.

It is a practice with opposite parties, in discussing these points, to state cases which are hardly within the limits of possibility. The patriot urges the danger which may arise from the exercise of prerogative: The courtier insists upon the necessity of arming the executive power with sufficient strength for defending the public welfare: The philosopher discerns, that, amidst the opposite hazards, a middle course ought to be followed, the line of which is rather to be traced by experience and attention to the manners and spirit of the times, than by abstract reasoning.

In discussing the several branches of prerogative, the abuses which may arise from them occur to be considered. But wherever power is lodged, the possibility of abuse must attend it. It is not, therefore, a sufficient reason for opposing prerogative, that it may be applied to a bad purpose. We should inquire, in the first place, what evils have arisen in times past from its misapplication; and, if we find any, whether the danger of their repetition has been since guarded against by constitutional restraints, or is worn away by a gradual change of na-

tional character. We should also inquire, whether there is reason to apprehend, that, from a change of circumstances, certain branches of prerogative are gaining strength by imperceptible degrees, and threatening to undermine the spirit of the constitution, while its forms are preserved.

The power of peace and war is a most important trust, and, from the magnitude of the object, would seem to belong to the legislative body. It has been said, that the power of concluding peace is more liable to abuse, than that of declaring war, because administration cannot obtain funds for war without the concurrence of parliament, whereas the public interest may suffer without remedy by an improper peace. The justice of this opinion may however be questioned. If administration declare war, and engage in hostilities, the nation in self-defence must support the war, however improperly undertaken. When we consider how wantonly wars are often engaged in, what immense expenditure of blood and treasure they occasion, and how seldom they answer the purpose for which they are undertaken, or any

purpose, we shall rather be disposed to shackle the power of commencing them, than that of bringing them to a termination.

It is urged that, when war is to take place, much depends upon dispatch, and that advantages may be gained by rapid measures, which cannot wait the slow decisions of a legislative body. If the importance of the first stroke, in regard to the general issue of a war, be tried by the experience of the last century, it will not be found very great. An instance which has been much insisted on, is the capture of the French ships previous to the declaration of war in 1756; which, by putting us in possession of a number of their seamen, is said to have given a fatal stroke to their naval power. But, during the first years of that war, we were not successful, not even in our favourite element. Some of our foreign possessions were taken, our fleet disgraced, and an admiral brought (unjustly, it is now believed) to capital punishment.—The brilliant successes which we obtained at the later period of the war, can hardly be attributed to our breach of the law of nations

at its commencement. When the chance of accommodating differences by negotiation, a method inconsistent with sudden strokes, is taken into account, and that the Crown might possess ample power for preparatory measures, which give weight to negotiation, although it had not the power of declaring war, or commencing hostilities, a lover of peace will consider this as one of the most dangerous branches of prerogative.

The negotiation of a peace is a business which cannot well be conducted by a public assembly. It requires a secrecy and nicety of management which do not accord with the proceedings of a numerous body. It must be entrusted to a single hand, or to a small and select number. In our government, this function belongs to the executive power. In one of a more popular structure, it may be devolved on a select committee. In either case, it may be questioned whether their powers should be final, or whether they should only extend to measures of preparation and arrangement, referring the ultimate decision to the legislative assembly. It may seem that an object of so great importance

to the public welfare, ought not to be decided without the consent of that body which is understood to speak the sentiments of the public. Yet experience suggests reasons of considerable weight on the opposite side.—The disposition of popular assemblies is not generally pacific. They are disposed to assume a higher tone than is suitable to the country; they do not know to what extent the strength and resources of the country are exhausted, and are apt to under-rate those of the enemy. It is the common practice of those concerned in administration to hold up the state of the country in the most favourable point of view, and even to exceed the bounds of truth. This is thought necessary, to support the spirit of the nation, and give energy to its exertions. During the dependence of a negociation, it would be imprudent to state publicly every point of national weakness, or express a desire of peace with all the energy that there is cause to entertain it. A public debate is, therefore, conducted on unequal terms. What favours one side is brought forward with confidence, and meets the wishes and prejudices of the public. The

arguments, on the other hand, must be stated with reserve ; and, when stated, are offered to reluctant ears. Men of discernment will indeed penetrate into the state of affairs, and not expect what is unattainable ; but these are never the majority of a large assembly, and often have not that commanding influence which they ought. The readiness which mankind generally entertain for engaging in war, and their reluctance to close with terms of peace, render it eligible that the forms of a constitution should throw every obstruction in the way of the former, but open every door to facilitate the latter.

The command of the military power, and the disposal of the public revenue, are the chief branches of prerogative which may be apprehended as dangerous to liberty. The former may directly overthrow it ; and the latter, applied as an instrument of corruption, may latently subvert it.

Arbitrary governments may be introduced, and are always supported, by military power. It was in this manner that William the Conqueror, and some of his successors, exercised a tyrannical despotism. The history of every

age bears record of its extensive and baneful prevalence ; and the experience of the present times affords too many instances of its still prevailing efficacy.

The danger of a power which has so often proved fatal to liberty, ought not to be deemed chimerical. Yet, when we consider the circumstances of our constitution, and the spirit of the times, the danger of our suffering from that quarter is very remote and improbable. The executive power possesses no independent means of raising or supporting an army, or of gaining it over as an engine of tyranny. Without the constant support of parliament, it must be annihilated. A very large proportion of the officers are men of considerable wealth and property, whose interest, and that of their families, is closely interwoven with the preservation of the constitution ; and who cannot be suspected of contributing to its subversion.

The Crown, indeed, possesses the entire power of appointing officers to the army ; but it is under the necessity of exercising this power with a view to support the interest of administration in parliament. Fa-

families of influence and property are always peculiarly favoured in military appointments. A different system, while it raised an alarm, would counteract, in a more important respect, the weight of prerogative. The course which is followed may not be the fittest for bringing forward able commanders, nor the most favourable for military spirit and exertion ; but it affords, from an exceptionable source, a valuable safeguard to liberty, by committing to trusty hands a power which might otherwise prove dangerous.

The power which arises from the disposal of the public revenue, and the right of appointing to offices of emolument, is generally believed the most formidable source of danger to which our constitution is exposed.

This is termed the influence of the crown, and has succeeded, in later times, to the more stern exertions of prerogative. A revenue must be provided adequate to the extent of the State and the public exigencies ; and these are strong reasons for placing it under the management of the executive power. A certain degree of *influence* on the part of administration is said to be necessary for blunting

the edge of opposition, and facilitating the measures of government.

The loudest declamations against corruption have proceeded from those who desire to supplant the ministry, in order to fill their places, and those who have formed extravagant notions of liberty, inconsistent with the principles of human nature, and incompatible with stable government. The hypocrisy of one of these classes, and the frantic zeal of the other, have been so manifest as in some measure to expose to reproach the cause in which they were exerted; and the partizans of administration are disposed to represent every degree of opposition as proceeding from selfish motives, or tending to dangerous innovation, and even to extend these censures to all who do not receive every measure of government with implicit approbation.

Yet may the constitution be as thoroughly subverted by a system of corruption as by any means whatever. A monarch backed by a venal parliament, and that parliament supported by a venal body of electors, is no less dangerous to liberty than a monarch at the head of a powerful army; and this danger is

more to be dreaded, that it attacks us in a latent and progressive manner, and carries along with it some circumstances peculiarly aggravating. To furnish means of corruption, the people must be loaded with excessive taxes ; and what is worst of all, this system introduces a general perversion of manners, which, beginning at the highest, pervades almost every order of society.

A jealousy of so great and spreading an evil may proceed from the most rational and virtuous patriotism, and indeed is inseparable from that character. Corruption, if carried to the utmost extent, must either operate to the direct subversion of the constitution, or by extinguishing its spirit reduce it to a state not worth preserving ; and, although the evil has not yet arrived at that magnitude, yet ought not the lesser degrees to be tamely acquiesced in, both on consideration of the detriment which they occasion, and of the danger of their farther progress.

Yet the rational patriot will not expect a degree of perfection unattainable in the present state of human nature. We know that mankind cannot be influenced by motives of

virtue and patriotism alone, and that, in order to carry through the measures of government, it will be sometimes necessary to conciliate or overawe them.

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